NATION

Denying sex in marriage is mental cruelty: HC

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Guj, K'taka best in startups promotion

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Sumit Nagal stuns world no 27 to enter 2nd round

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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PHOTO: PTI

Ramaswamy drops out of Presidential race, backs Trump

WASHINGTON, 16 JAN

Vivek Ramaswamy, a multi-millionaire Indian-American entrepreneur-turned-politician, suspended his 2024 presidential campaign following his poor showing in Monday's Iowa caucuses and backed its winner Donald Trump as the former US president sought to reclaim the White House in November. "I will stick to the truth tonight. The first hard truth and this was hard for me, I gotta admit this, but we've looked at it every which way. And I think it is true that we did not achieve the surprise that we wanted to deliver tonight," Ramaswamy told his disappointed supporters in Des Moines, Iowa. At 38, Ramaswamy was the youngest candidate running for the 2024 Republican Party's presidential nomination. The biotech entrepreneur was a distant fourth with 7.7 per cent of the votes polled on Monday. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Indian Coast Guard rescues 182 stranded in Bengal

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) on Tuesday rescued 182 stranded pilgrims on board a ferry off Kakdwip in West Bengal, a statement said.Merchant Vessel 'Swasthya Sathi' was ferrying about 400 pilgrims from Ganga Sagar Mela at Sagar island to Kakdwip when it ran aground due to extremely poor visibility, the statement issued by the ICG said."In a swift operation, the Indian Coast Guard rescued 182 pilgrims stranded on a grounded ferry off Kakdwip in West Bengal on 16 January," it said. The operations team of the ICG swung into action and dispatched two air cushion vehicles (Hovercrafts) from Haldia and Sagar island to provide assistance."The hovercrafts evacuated 182 pilgrims before guiding the boat with the remaining pilgrims to a safe destination," the ICG said."To ensure the safety of people during the annual mela, the ICG had already deployed sea-borne units at various strategic locations," it said. *—PTI*

Dhoni slapped with defamation suit from ex-partners

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Two ex-business partners of former Team India cricket captain MS Dhoni have filed a defamation suit in the Delhi High Court against the cricketer. The defamation plea is listed for hearing on 18 January before Justice Prathiba M Singh. Plaintiffs and former business partners Mihir Diwakar and his wife Soumya Das approached the high court seeking a permanent injunction and damages against Dhoni, several social media platforms and media houses and thereby restraining them from making, publishing, circulating per se defamatory, ex facie false and malicious statements against them. The defendants restrained from damaging the reputation of the plaintiffs in relation to the false allegations allegedly made by Dhoni relating to purported illegal gains of Rs 15 crores from him and breach of a 2017 contract, the plaint said. *—PTI*

SC stays Allahabad HC order on Shahi Idgah survey

SC questioned the 'vague' application made before HC for the survey

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the operation of Allahabad High Court order that allowed a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex adjoining the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple in Mathura.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta stayed the implementation of the 14 December, 2023 order by which it had agreed to the appointment of a court commissioner to oversee the survey of the mosque premises which, the Hindu side claims, hold signs suggesting that it was a temple once.

However, the apex court made it clear those proceedings before the high court in the dispute including the maintainability of the suit under Order 7 Rule 11 of the Civil Procedure Code (CPC) will continue.

Court pointed out the legal issues regarding the survey *PHOTO: PTI*

The bench said there are certain legal issues which have arisen and questioned the "vague" application made before the high court for appointment of a court commissioner for the survey.

"We have reservations about the application. Look at the prayer. It's so vague. Read it. You can't file a vague application for appointment of court commissioner. You cannot make an omnibus application like this. You have to be very clear what you want the local commissioner to do in application under Order 26 Rule 9 of CPC," Justice Khanna told senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Hindu bodies like Bhagwan Shri Krishna Virajman and others.

- Supreme Court made it clear the proceedings before the high court in the dispute including the maintainability of the suit under Order 7 Rule 11 of the Civil Procedure Code (CPC) will continue

At the outset, advocate Tasneem Ahmadi, appearing for the mosque management committee, submitted that the High Court could not have passed the order when an application seeking rejection of the suit on being barred by the Places of Worship Act 1991.

Ahmadi referred to the recent judgement in Asma Lateef versus Shabbir Ahmad of the apex court which had held that when an interim relief is claimed in a suit and the party to be affected by grant of such relief, or any other party to the suit, raises a point of maintainability thereof or that it is barred by law, then the civil court ought to record at least a prima facie satisfaction that the suit is maintainable or that it is not barred by law. *—PTI*

SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCAM

SC refuses to quash FIR against Naidu

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Supreme Court has delivered a split verdict on former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's plea challenging High Court order refusing to quash the FIR registered against him in the Skill Development Corporation scam case.

The bench, comprising Justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M. Trivedi, differed on the applicability of Prevention of Corruption Act Section 17A, which deals with prior approval for conducting probe. The Act's Section 17A, which was introduced on 26 July, 2018 as part of an amendment, stipulates a mandatory requirement for a police officer to seek prior approval from the competent authority to conduct any enquiry or inquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant.

Justice Bose held that the authorities should have taken prior approval to hold the investigation under the Prevention of Corruption Act. "However, I refuse to quash the remand order. The lack of approval will not make the remand order non-est," Justice Bose said, while granting liberty to the state to seek such approval.

Chandrababu Naidu *PHOTO: PTI*

Justice Trivedi said section 17A will not apply retrospectively and upheld the high court order refusing to quash the FIR.The bench said the matter be placed before the Chief Justice of India for appropriate directions.Naidu was arrested on 9 September, 2023, for allegedly misappropriating funds from the Skill Development Corporation when he was the chief minister in 2015, causing a purported loss of Rs 371 crore to the state exchequer. *—PTI*

YS Sharmila new AP Congress Chief

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

YS Sharmila
PHOTO: X/ REALYSSHARMILA

Congress on Tuesday appointed YS Sharmila, the daughter of former chief minister YS Rajasekhar Reddy, as the new president of the party's Andhra Pradesh unit.

Sharmila, the sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, had joined the Congress on 4 January in Delhi in the presence of Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi.

"Congress President has appointed Sharmila Reddy as the President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee with immediate effect," an official announcement by the party said. "Congress President has also appointed Shri Gidugu Rudra Raju, the outgoing PCC President, as special invitee to the Congress Working Committee. The party appreciates the contributions of Gidugu Rudra Raju in his role as PCC president," the Congress said.

Sharmila while thanking the Congress leadership for her appointment said she would work faithfully towards restoring the past glory of the party in the state with total commitment and integrity. "I thank hon'ble @kharge ji, #SoniaGandhi ji, @RahulGandhi ji, and @kcvenugopalmp ji for trusting me with post of the president of @INC_Andhra Pradesh. I promise to work faithfully towards rebuilding the party to its past glory in Andhra Pradesh with total commitment and integrity," she said in a post on X.Noting that she was looking forward to working closely with each and every Congress foot soldier, Sharmila sought the support of Gidugu Rudra Raju who resigned as APCC chief to enable her to take over the post.AICC in-charge of Andhra Pradesh Manickam Tagore congratulated Sharmila on being appointed as the new chief of the Andhra Pradesh Congress, saying "I hope you will contribute to making the Congress party stronger, similar to the way late YS Rajasekhara Reddy did in 1999 and 2004." *—PTI*

REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS

Flower arrangements being prepared for Republic Day flower show at the Glass House in Lal Bagh, Bengaluru, on Tuesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

By-poll for K'taka's Council seat on 16 Feb

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

The by-election for one vacant seat of the Karnataka Legislative Council will be held on 16 February, the Election Commission of India said.

The seat going to polls fell vacant after Puttanna had resigned from the Legislative Council and the BJP ahead of the assembly election last year.

He contested from Rajajinagar assembly constituency in Bengaluru on Congress ticket and lost to former minister and BJP candidate S Suresh Kumar.

The ECI said the term of the winning candidate will be till 11 November, 2026.

According to a press note issued by the ECI, the notification will be issued on 23 January and the last date of making nomination is 30 January.

The nominations will be scrutinised on 31 January and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is 2 February. The election will take place on 16 February from 8 am to 4 pm and the counting of vote will be on 20 February.

The ECI said the polling process should be completed by 23 February. *—PTI*

Guj: 17 complain of vision loss after surgery

AHMEDABAD, 16 JAN

As many as 17 people have complained of partial or complete loss of vision after undergoing cataract surgery at a trust-run hospital in Ahmedabad district, prompting authorities to order a probe, an official said here on Tuesday.

The Gujarat health and family welfare department has formed a nine-member expert committee to conduct an inquiry and also asked the eye hospital at Mandal village not to perform any more cataract surgeries until further orders, said Satish Makwana, deputy director (health and medical services), Ahmedabad region.

The matter came to light after five people who underwent surgery at the Ramanand Eye Hospital at Mandal on 10 January were referred to the ophthalmology department at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital on Monday for treatment, he said.

The hospital in Mandal had performed nearly 100 cataract surgeries this month, Makwana said, adding that a camp has been set up at Viramgam town to screen all these patients for complications. *—PTI*

ESCALATING CLASHES AT LAC COME TO LIGHT

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

At least two previously unknown incidents of skirmishes between the Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) have come to light with citations for gallantry awards conferred on Indian Army personnel mentioning them.

The citations, read out at an investiture ceremony by the Army's Western Command last week, provided brief details of how the Indian troops responded firmly to the aggressive behaviour by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers along the LAC. The Army's Western Command, which has its headquarters in Chandimandir, had uploaded a video of the 13th January ceremony featuring the commentary on the gallantry award on its YouTube channel but deactivated it on Monday.

The incidents mentioned in the citations had taken place between September 2021 and November 2022.

The Indian Army has been maintaining a very high level of combat readiness along the 3,488 km-long LAC following the clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020. *—PTI*

Soon stream videos without SIM, internet

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Mobile users may soon be able to stream videos without a SIM card or an internet connection as Direct-to-Mobile broadcasting could become a reality in the near future.

Addressing a Broadcasting Summit, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Apurva Chandra said trials of the home-grown Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) technology would soon be held in 19 cities and made a strong pitch for reserving the 470-582 MHz spectrum for this emerging technology.

Chandra said a 25-30 per cent shift of video traffic to D2M would unclog the 5G networks, accelerating the nation's digital evolution and democratising content delivery.

Last year, pilot projects to test the D2M technology were carried out in Bengaluru, Kartavya Path and Noida.

Chandra said the D2M technology would help reach nearly 8-9 crore "TV Dark" homes across the country. Of the 280 million households in the country, only 190 million have television sets.With the potential to reach over a billion mobile devices, the adoption of D2M technology promises transformative benefits, including cost reductions in data transmission and access, improvements in network efficiency and resilience, and potentially leading to the establishment of a nationwide emergency alert system. *—PTI*

10TH FATALITY

Namibian cheetah Shaurya dies in MP

BHOPAL, 16 JAN

Namibian cheetah Shaurya died at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, state Forest Minister Nagar Singh Chouhan said, making it the 10th such fatality since the reintroduction of African big cats in India in 2022.

The exact cause of the feline's death was not immediately clear and it will be known only after post-mortem examination, said a forest department statement.

Forest Minister Chouhan said he has received a report about the death of Namibian cheetah Shaurya at the KNP in Sheopur district.

The male cheetah was found not walking properly by the tracking team around 11 am after which it was tranquilized and efforts were made to revive the feline, but they failed, said the statement.

The cause of the cheetah's death will be known after the post-mortem, said an official statement *PHOTO: ANI*

Since March 2023, seven adult cheetahs, including Shaurya, and three cubs have died at the KNP due to various reasons, taking the toll to ten.The total number of surviving cheetahs at the KNP now stands at 17 (six males, seven females and four cubs).Under the Cheetah Reintroduction Project, eight big cats from Namibia - five females and three males - were released into enclosures at the KNP on 17 September in 2022. In February 2023, another 12 cheetahs were brought to the park from South Africa.

In December last year, four cheetahs were released into the wild, but two of them were later captured and shifted to bomas (enclosures). One of these two , Agni, was tranquilised in Baran district of Rajasthan and brought back to the KNP. In May last year, the Supreme Court had asked the Centre to file a detailed affidavit explaining the reasons and remedial measures taken. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

6 injured in LPG cylinder blast

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

At least six people sustained injuries, and five residences were damaged on Tuesday Due to an LPG cylinder blast in Lal Bahadur Shastri Layout in Yelahanka. Two of the injured are in critical condition and have been admitted to Victoria Hospital, while the others are receiving treatment at Yelahanka government hospital. The blast occurred at around 7.15 am at the ground floor of a one storied building on a 20 X 30 site. The explosion originated from a cylinder stored at a residence in Lal Bahadur Shastri Layout in Yelahanka, affecting five neighbouring houses within the jurisdiction of Yelahanka police station. The injured include Wasiya Banu, Salma, Shaheed, Asma, and Afroj, the sixth person yet to be determined. *—Salar News*

Truck carrying diesel overturns

TUMAKURU, 16 JAN

A truck carrying diesel overturned on Halkurke Road in Tiptur taluk near Harisamudra gate. The driver lost control, causing a fuel leak. People at the scene swiftly gathered and started stealing diesel from the leaking point. The incident, blamed on speeding, has heightened concerns about frequent accidents with fast-moving trucks. A woman named Sarvamangala, riding her scooter, suffered severe injuries when the lorry collided with her bike. She has been admitted to a public hospital in Tiptur for treatment, while the lorry driver sustained minor injuries and is reported to be safe. Honnavalli police and fire brigade personnel responded to the incident, taking an hour to control the public gathering. *—Salar News*

3-day Bengaluru GAFX to be held from 29 Jan

BENGLAURU, 16 JAN

Bengaluru GAFX, positioned as the country's flagship event in the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comics (AVGC) sector, will be held here from 29 to 31. The focal theme of Bengaluru GAFX (Games, Animation and Visual Effects), organised by the Karnataka Department of Information Technology-Biotechnology, and Association of Bangalore Animation Industry (ABAI), is 'Augmented Intelligence: Powering AVGC'. "Bengaluru GAFX will bring together the Animation, Visual Effects, Games & Comics industry for a congregation of knowledge exchange like no other. The event will see the industry, academia, and government come onto a common platform to deliberate the learnings, challenges and future roadmap," the organisers said. *—PTI*

MLC wants CM to take action against drug menace

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda wrote a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwar requesting to take action against drugs, especially near educational institutions and to create awareness amongst the youth about the ill effects of drugs. Gooligowda in his letter questioned the silence of police officials. "Police should take action and curb the sales and network of the drug peddlers," he said. He advised the ministers to form a special team and strict actions to be taken against the culprits as per law. Amongst the several pieces of advice, he said, awareness programmes should be conducted in all the schools across the state and arrangements of police patrolling within 100m of the schools. *—Salar News*

CM orders 8 more DCP posts; to give silver medals to cops

CM announced the construction of a well-equipped Suvarna Bhavan for police

BENGALURU, JAN 16

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday ordered the creation of an Additional Deputy Commissioners of Police post for all eight zonal Deputy Commissioners of Police in the city. "We are celebrating golden jubilee of the naming of our state as Karnataka. The state police too got its name of Karnataka police, which was previously known as Mysore police. This should be celebrated," he told reporters at the Golden Jubilee of Karnataka Unification event.

Speaking at the event, the Chief Minister announced the construction of a well-equipped Suvarna Bhavan for the Police Department and the funds will be allocated in the upcoming budget in February. The senior police officials of Cyber, Economic and Narcotics (C.E.N) stations will be upgraded to the posts of Additional Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police.

"We have also decided to give silver medal to all the policemen to celebrate 50 years of the naming of state as Karnataka."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah checks out a weapon during Annual Senior Police Officers Meet in Bengaluru on Tuesday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Siddaramaiah also announced that starting this year the limit for the annual medical check-up worth Rs 1,000, which all police officials are entitled to, will be upgraded to Rs 1,500. A silver medal will be provided to all the police personnel of the state, said Siddaramaiah.

However, Siddaramaiah expressed dissatisfaction over the punishment rate for crimes against the dalits, women and children.

Speaking at the event the Chief Minister said, "The quality of investigation in cases of atrocities should be improved if the victims are to have faith in the system. Violence against women and children should be completely stopped by increasing punishment. Otherwise, it will be necessary to blame the DCPs themselves for this failure."

"Our government has given complete liberty to the police. It is my commitment not to interfere regarding police affairs, but the liberty should not be misused," he said.

Regarding the increasing theft cases, Siddaramaiah said that the increase in theft cases reflects the failure of Hoysala and patrolling officers.

The Chief Minister also advised against using caste for transfers in the department. He also promised that all the vacancies would be filled as soon as possible.

—Salar News with agencies

DK Shivakumar with BBMP officials receive complaints from the residents as part of Jana Spandana programme on Tuesday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Planning to lower property tax & penalties: DKS

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said he was discussing with BBMP officials ways to reduce property tax penalties for certain types of properties in Bengaluru. "There are a lot of pleas regarding the reduction of property tax and penalties for 30 ft x 40 ft sites and sheds," said Shivakumar at the mass grievance redressal programme titled 'Government at Your Doorstep' at Gandhinagar on Tuesday.

Shivakumar said they are receiving several complaints on property taxes. "Do not be alarmed if people receive a notice to pay the tax within the time limit. The penalties will be reduced as much as possible."

Due to the Act on Property Tax that came into effect in 2020, the penalties for late payment have been increased. "The law needs to be amended and information about this will be out in a few days. Our government will survey and deliver your property documents to your doorsteps for free. Officials will not pressurise people about tax payments," Shivakumar said.

"The self-declared property tax system is failing. Neither people nor the corporation is benefitting from this system. People with three-storied houses claim it as one-storey houses to avoid taxes," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

Shivakumar instructed the officials to suspend Girish, an accountant of Bengaluru Electric Supply Company Limited (BESCOM) of Kengeri Divison, for asking bribe of Rs 50,000 to release the arrears of the revised pension scheme.

Street vendor controversy

BJP MLA CN Ashwath Narayan, who was present in the programme, drew attention to the issue of street vendors encroaching on footpaths. Shivakumar said the High Court has also issued an order on this and if there is a failure to obey the orders, the commissioner will have to go to jail. "This is not to say that street vendors should not conduct business. You have to register and trade in a pushcart. If you put a shop on the footpath, where should the common man walk?" Shivakumar questioned.

Cases against unauthorised posters

Shivakumar said a new advertising policy will be introduced to curb unauthorised flex banners. "The Commissioner has been instructed to register a case against unauthorised flex banners."

—Salar News

HC seeks report on appointing wardens to hostels

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

Karnataka High Court on Tuesday raised concerns about the recruitment for the positions of wardens and supervisors in government hostels under Department of Social Welfare. The court ordered that a report focusing on students belonging to SCs and STs be submitted within two weeks.

The order of the bench of Chief Justice Prasanna B Varale and Justice Krishna S Dixit came in a suo moto public interest litigation initiated by the court following news reports about the condition of these government-run hostels. The HC noted that the shortage of staff is severely affecting the academic progress of students in these hostels.

Advocate Nitin Ramesh, who is the amicus curiae in the case, informed the court that National Child Rights Commission has issued guidelines on how hostels should be managed. Recording the amicus curiae's submissions, the HC said the government needs to respond to this and a comprehensive report is expected from it. The court directed that a copy of the State's report should be provided to the amicus curiae before the next hearing.

The HC also reminded the government that as per its earlier direction, the recruitment of wardens for government hostels should be completed within six months.

—Salar News

High Court *PHOTO: PTI*

WOOING TAMILS

BJP now calls upon Thiruvalluvar ahead of polls

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

State BJP President BY Vijayendra said on Tuesday that the statue of Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar located adjoining Ulsoor Lake in City represents brotherhood among the people of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Thiruvalluvar was a celebrated Tamil poet who wrote couplets on all areas of life. 15 January is observed as Thiruvalluvar Day in the poet's honour as part of Pongal celebrations.

Vijayendra's statement, coming in the wake of the ensuing Lok Sabha elections, is keeping in mind the large number of Tamil people in Bengaluru, according to political watchers. Tamil-speaking masses form around 14 per cent (around 16 lakh) of the population of the City.

Speaking to **Salar News**, a functionary of the Bangalore Tamil Sangam who sought anonymity, said: "We are well aware of the political motives of various parties to cash in on the sizeable Tamil vote bank as Lok Sabha polls are round the corner. We have taken this statement lightly and finally, it is left to the voters to decide."

BY Vijayendra said that the statue of Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar in City represents brotherhood among the people of TNand K'taka
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Vijayendra said the statues of Thiruvalluvar in Bengaluru and Kannada legendary poet Sarvajna at Ayanavaram in Chennai stand as a symbol of brotherhood between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The statues of Thiruvalluvar in Bengaluru and Sarvajna in Tamil Nadu were inaugurated after being under wraps for 18 years due to opposition from certain groups, the State BJP President said.

"Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa (his father) made this a reality," Vijayendra said. Late Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi unveiled the Thiruvalluvar statue on 9 August 2009 in the presence of the then chief minister Yediyurappa. The statue was installed and maintained by Bangalore Tamil Sangam. *—Salar News*

Ex-speaker, Konemane compete for BJP ticket

KARWAR, 16 JAN

Former Assembly Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri expressed confidence in securing the BJP ticket for the Uttara Kannada Lok Sabha constituency in the upcoming elections. Addressing the media in Sirsi, Kageri indicated that the party leaders have already made a decision regarding the candidate for the Uttara Kannada constituency, hinting that he may receive the BJP ticket.

"I am working in accordance with the instructions of Modiji and the party. Every day, I am travelling across the constituency for party work. The people of our constituency know my commitment to win as a BJP candidate from Uttara Kannada district," said Kageri. However, he refrained from providing further details, suggesting that the official list will be published soon.

Ananth Kumar Hegde, who had stayed away from public events since being elected as MP, has recently re-emerged, signalling his intent for the BJP ticket in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Kageri has been actively lobbying for the ticket, and there is also competition from Hariprakash Konemane who is reportedly being considered for the Bangalore North Constituency. Sources suggest that high command is more inclined towards Kageri. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

> **The people of our constituency know my commitment to win as a BJP candidate from Uttara Kannada district**
>
> -Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri

Chennai-B'luru-Mysuru HSR project gains speed

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

The National High-Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL) has initiated the ambitious Chennai-Bengaluru-Mysuru High-Speed Train connection project.The project, covering a distance of 435 km, aims to connect the bustling cities of Chennai, Bengaluru, and Mysuru that facilitates faster and more efficient travel. Preparations for the project are currently underway, including the creation of general connection diagrams, surveys, and identification of locations for flyovers and underpasses. Meetings with landowners for potential land acquisition are also being conducted. The envisioned Chennai-Bangalore-Mysore High-Speed Rail (HSR) is anticipated to have stops at nine stations, namely Chennai, Poonamallee, Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu, Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, and Bangarapet, Bangalore, Channapatna, Mandya, and Mysuru in Karnataka.

Current developments include land surveys and discussions with landowners to facilitate land acquisition. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) is expected to provide precise details regarding connectivity, station locations, estimated passenger traffic, and fare structures. *—Salar News*

The project, covers a distance of 435 km, and aims to connect the bustling cities of Chennai, Bengaluru, and Mysuru
PHOTO: SALAR

Revenue minister assures relief to farmers

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

First instalment of drought relief fund to reach farmers within this week, said Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda on Tuesday at the Raichur Pragati Prasilahan Sabha.

He said, "We have noticed the past deficiencies in providing relief. The compensation did not reach to those whose crops were damaged." Byre Gowda said that the government is planning to improve the system and digitize the records in 31 districts and 31 taluks to expedite document retrieval. He said, "We will extend digitization to all taluks within six months to facilitate easy access of documents for the public."

Concerning drought relief, Gowda mentioned the delay in central government assistance and stated that the state had decided to provide compensation of Rs 2,000 to affected farmers.

Krishna Byre Gowda *PHOTO: PTI*

The first instalment of 800-900 crores, is set to benefit 25-30 lakh people. However, the state has sought 4,663 crores from the central government.

Byre Gowda urged the prime minister and home minister to revise the rules governing compensation under National Drought Relief fund (NDRF) and State Drought Relief fund (SDRF). *—Salar News*

Row over Melkote temple land erupts

MANDYA, 16 JAN

The Melkote Cheluvanarayana Swamy temple land in Kesare village of Mysuru has been illegally transferred into others. A complaint has been filed to the Mandya DC by Ravikumar, alleging that 14 acres of temple land granted by the Maharaja of Mysuru has been unlawfully registered in the names of four individuals.

According to the complaint, the Maharaja had donated 20 acres of land to the Cheluvanarayana Swamy Temple in Melukote, out of which 14 acres were allegedly registered in the names of private individuals in 2001. The individuals claimed to have received the land under the Land Reforms Act, 1973. The complaint further alleges the involvement of revenue officials in the misappropriation of temple land.

Ravikumar had urged the Mandya DC to rectify the situation and transfer the land back to the name of the temple.

In response, the Mandya district administration initiated an investigation into the matter.

—Salar News

PHOTO: SALAR

IDEOLOGICAL CONCERN

Muslims have to change mindset: Ravi

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

- Hegde said that Indian Muslim stayed back after reposing their trust in the Sanatana Dharma.
- He also said that the Chinnadapalli mosque of Bhatkal will meet the same fate as the Babri mosque

Former national general secretary and senior BJP leader CT Ravi expressed concerns about the mindset of historical figures like Ghazni, Ghori, and Babar, deeming them dangerous. Ravi said, "Indian Muslims have to come out of Ghazni, Ghori, Babar mindset."

Speaking to reporters in Chikkamagaluru, Ravi said, "During the times of Ghazni, Ghori, Khilji, Aurangzeb, other Mughals, and Tipu Sultan, 42,000 temples were defeated. Indian Muslims don't identify with these invaders and stayed back and they aligned with ideals represented by figures like Shishunala Sharif and APJ Abdul Kalam for a strengthened sense of fraternity." He added Indian Muslim stayed back after reposing their trust in the Sanatana Dharma.

He further said, " if muslims feels'haram' to offer prayers in masjids after destroying temples then these Muslim are showing broadmindedness," Ravi stated. Earlier BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde Hegde, who was addressing the BJP cadre in Kumta on Saturday, had lashed out at the Chief Minister stating that Siddaramaiah is a person who would go to any extent to appease the minority and mocked his dilemma on going to Ayodhya. "Whether you (Siddaramaiah) attend the event or not, the temple event will not stop," Hegde said. On the occasion, Hegde also said that the Chinnadapalli mosque of Bhatkal will meet the same fate as the Babri mosque.

Earlier, BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde, addressing BJP cadre in Kumta, lashed out at the Chief Minister, stating that Siddaramaiah is a person who would go to any extent to appease the minority and mocked his dilemma on going to Ayodhya. "Whether you (Siddaramaiah) attend the event or not, the temple event will not stop," Hegde said. On the occasion,

— Salar News

PHOTO: ANI

ROGUE ELEPHANT CAPTURED IN HASSAN

HASSAN, 16 JAN

A 30-year-old rogue elephant was captured by forest officials near Nallur village of Belur Taluk in the Hassan district on Saturday. Forest officials conducted an operation to capture, radio collar and relocate all the elephants that go rogue and cause harm to humans residing in those areas. The state government had permitted the capture of nine rogue elephants in June of last year. Out of which, six have already been captured and translocated. This operation had started in November 2023 and stopped temporarily in December 2023 due to the death of the Dasara elephant, Arjuna. It was recommenced on 12 January. *—Salar News*

Mamata announces 'harmony rally' in Kolkata on 22 Jan

KOLKATA, 16 JAN

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced on Tuesday that she will lead a 'rally for harmony' with people of all religions in Kolkata on 22 January amid the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya.Banerjee, the chief of the ruling TMC, said she would begin the procession from the Hazra crossing in south Kolkata after paying obeisance to Goddess Kali at the Kalighat temple."On 22 January, I will visit the Kalighat temple and offer puja. Then I will take part in a harmony rally with people of all religions. This has nothing to do with any other programme," she said, addressing a press conference at the state secretariat.The march, to be organised by the TMC, will touch upon places of worship of different religions, including mosques, churches and gurdwaras, before culminating at the Park Circus Maidan, she said. Banerjee also asked workers to organise similar rallies in all the districts of the state. She said that 'Pran Pratistha' is not the job of politicians but of priests. —*PTI*

108-foot-long incense stick lit at Ayodhya

Ayodhya , 16 Jan

Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust Mahant Nritya Gopal Das on Tuesday lit a 108-foot-long incense stick brought here from Gujarat. Das lit the incense stick amid a huge crowd chanting "Jai Shri Ram". The fragrance from the incense stick will reach a distance of 50km, it has been claimed. The incense stick weighing 3,610kg has a width of around three-and-a-half feet. It has been brought to this Uttar Pradesh town from Gujarat's Vadodara.Cow dung, ghee, essence, flower extracts and herbs were used to prepare the incense stick, which, once lit, will last for about a month and a half. The consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya is scheduled to be held on 22 January. —*PTI*

Two held for killing Moreh SDPO in Manipur

IMPHAL, 16 JAN

Two people were arrested for allegedly being involved in the killing of a sub-divisional police officer at Moreh in Manipur's Tengnoupal district, police said on Tuesday. They were apprehended on Monday evening by special commando teams at the border town, a police statement said."During patrolling near Moreh College, security personnel observed two suspected individuals who fired at the vehicles of security personnel and ran into a cluster of houses. "The security forces immediately retaliated and cordoned off the houses near Moreh College," the police said.During the operation, the two people were " overpowered and detained for verification", the statement said.They were arrested after a firearm and ammunition were seized from their possession, it said.A group of women, however, staged a demonstration in front of the Moreh Police Station, demanding the release of the two people. —*PTI*

Shah to chair NEC plenary in Shillong on 19 Jan

SHILLONG, 16 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Shillong to chair the North Eastern Council plenary here on 19 January, officials said on Tuesday.Shah is also the chairman of the Council. Governors and chief ministers of all eight NE states are likely to attend the plenary. The minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) G Kishan Reddy and his deputy BL Verma are also scheduled to be present there, an NEC spokesperson told PTI. Shah will also release the NEC Yearbook on this occasion.The NEC consists of eight states of the region - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. —*PTI*

PM holds roadshow in Kerala ahead of polls

Modi said action against corruption has been priority of govt

KOCHI, 16 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday emphasised the BJP's significant focus on the opposition-dominated Kerala in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections by conducting a massive roadshow in this port city, marking the second such event in the state where the party had no success in the previous polls.

Thousands of BJP workers and local residents lined both sides of the 1.3km road to welcome the Prime Minister, who visited the city for private, public, and party functions in Ernakulam and Thrissur districts on Wednesday.

Commencing from the KPCC junction at 7.45pm, the open vehicle carrying Modi, accompanied by BJP state president K Surendran, traversed at a slow pace, captivating party workers who showered flowers and chanted slogans.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at supporters during a roadshow *PHOTO: PTI*

The procession covered a distance of 1.3km in approximately 25 minutes.

Thousands of people, including avid BJP supporters with flowers, garlands, and party flags, lined both sides of the 1.3-km roadshow route from KPCC junction here to the Ernakulam government guest house, where he would be staying.

Action against corrupt top priority of NDA govt, says PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asserted that action against corruption and corrupt people has been the priority of the NDA government at the Centre.Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) in Palasamudram in Sri Satyasai district, Modi said the taxpayers money was being properly utilised and whatever collected is being given back to the people in different forms.

He also claimed that people of this country saved nearly Rs 2.5 lakh crore in tax savings since 2014 after the Modi-led government took over, 10 crore fake names have been weeded out of the documents."In the last 10 years, we have empowered the poor, farmers, women and youth.... 10 crore fake names have been weeded out of the documents. Every paisa sent from Centre reaches the bank account of the beneficiaries he said.

—*PTI*

Manipur MLAs write to Shah

IMPHAL, 16 JAN

Home Minister Amit Shah receives letter from 10 tribal ministers, requesting him to issue directions to the state government to reinstate three officers in services, who have been suspended for allegedly helping 26 schools in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts get CBSE affiliation.

In a memorandum to the Home Minister, the MLAs, including seven belonging to the ruling BJP, claimed that it has been learnt that the Kuki-Zomi officers serving in the Manipur education department were suspended by the state government for issuing no objection certificates to the 26 schools for obtaining CBSE affiliation, following the ethnic violence in the northeastern state.

The legislators also sought "to initiate necessary steps to restore the CBSE affiliation" granted in favour of these schools at the earliest.

State Education Minister Th Basanta Kumar Singh could not be reached for comment.

PHOTO: PTI

The Manipur government had, earlier, instituted a three-member inquiry committee to probe "into the issuance of no objection certificates for CBSE affiliation by unauthorised persons/ officials".

The committee was asked to "find out officials responsible for issuing the NOCs without following due process... and recommend appropriate actions against responsible officers".

CBSE later withdrew the affiliation with immediate effect "on the ground that the NOCs submitted by these schools have not been issued by the competent authorised functionaries of the state government and for cancellation of affiliation as requested by the state government".

—*PTI*

Jal Jeevan Case : ED raids premises of ex-Cong min

JAIPUR, 16 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday searched premises linked to former Rajasthan minister Mahesh Joshi and some others in a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the Jal Jeevan Mission, official sources said.

Last year, the federal agency had conducted at least two rounds of raids in the case related to the central government programme.The locations linked to Joshi, a former minister of the public health engineering (PHE) department, are being searched under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said. Joshi was denied a ticket by the Congress to contest from the Hawa Mahal seat in Jaipur in the recently held assembly polls in the state.The agency had earlier claimed that several middlemen and property dealers "aided" officials of the Rajasthan government's PHE department to siphon off "illegally earned" money from the Jal Jeevan Mission. —*PTI*

Rituals begin at Ram Temple

PHOTO: PTI

AYODHYA , 16 JAN

The run-up to the Ram Mandir consecration ceremony here on 22 January began on Tuesday with a series of rituals, led by a member of the temple trust and his wife.

These rituals will reach their finale with the consecration, or 'pran pratishtha, of the idol of Ram Lalla at the new temple in Ayodhya.

"The 'anushthan' has started and will continue till 22 January, the day of the consecration ceremony. Eleven priests are performing the rituals invoking all goddesses and gods," Ram temple chief priest Satyendra Das said.

The 'yajman' at the rituals – including the ones conducted on the final consecration days – is trust member Anil Mishra and his wife Usha Mishra.

Typically, the 'yajman' is the main "host" of a "puja" -- the person on whose behalf the prayers are offered. Mishra has to attend the rituals on all days, including on January 22 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present.

Mishra confirmed that he is the "yajman" for the ceremony.

Earlier, there was a debate if Modi is entitled to adopt the role which usually goes to a "householder".

Modi is scheduled to deliver a speech at the end of the consecration ceremony, expected to be attended by 8,000 guests.

But only a handful of them will be allowed

'BJP's motive behind Temple was political'

BHOPAL, 16 JAN

Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh on Tuesday alleged that the intention of the BJP, RSS and VHP behind demolishing the Babri mosque in Ayodhya was not to build a temple at the site, but to make it a Hindu-Muslim issue for political mileage.

In a post on social media platform X, the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister claimed the Congress never opposed the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, but raised question marks over the location of the new temple, where the idol consecration ceremony will take place on 22 January."(The Congress) only asked to wait till the court's decision for the construction (of temple) on the disputed land. Bhoomi pujan on non-disputed land was done during the time of Rajiv ji (former PM Rajiv Gandhi). (Ex-PM PV) Narasimha Rao ji had also acquired non-disputed land for the construction of Ram temple," Singh said.He alleged the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) had to demolish the mosque anyway, but their intention was not to build a temple at the site."... Because, until the mosque is demolished, it does not become a Hindu-Muslim issue. Destruction is in their behaviour and character; taking political advantage by spreading unrest is their strategy," said the Rajya Sabha member, hitting out at the saffron organisations. —*PTI*

Mahua served eviction notice to vacate govt bungalow

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Directorate of Estates on Tuesday issued a notice to evict former TMC MP Mahua Moitra, who was expelled from the Lok Sabha last month, from her government bungalow, sources in the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said.

The Trinamool Congress leader has been asked to vacate the bungalow immediately, which had been allotted to her as an MP, they said.

"Since the eviction notice was issued to her (Moitra) on Tuesday, a team of officials from the directorate of estates will now be sent to ensure that the government bungalow is vacated at the earliest," a source told PTI.

The TMC leader, who was expelled from the Lok Sabha on 8 December last year, was earlier asked to vacate the house by 7 January after her allotment was cancelled.

Mahua Moitra *PHOTO: PTI*

On 8 January, the DoE had issued a notice seeking her reply within three days as to why she had not vacated her government accommodation. Another notice was also issued to her on 12 January .

On 4 January, the Delhi High Court asked the TMC leader to approach the DoE with a request to allow her to continue to occupy the government accommodation allotted to her.

Justice Subramoniun Prasad, while dealing with Moitra's challenge to an official intimation asking her to vacate the government bungalow by 7 January, noted that the rules permitted the authorities to allow a resident to overstay for up to six months on payment of certain charges in exceptional circumstances.

The court allowed Moitra to withdraw her petition and noted it has not made any observations on the merits of the matter. It said the DoE shall decide her case after applying its own mind.It added that the law mandates issuing notice to a resident before eviction and the government has to take steps to evict the petitioner in accordance with law.Moitra was held guilty of "unethical conduct" and expelled from Lok Sabha on December 8 last year for allegedly accepting gifts from businessman Darshan Hiranandani and sharing her user ID and password of the Parliament website with him. —*PTI*

MLC Kavitha skips ED questioning

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

BRS leader Kavitha K did not appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday for a fresh round of questioning in connection with a money-laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy, officials said.

The 45-year-old daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao is understood to have communicated her decision not to comply with the ED summons to the investigating officer through an email.

Her lawyer, Nitesh Rana, told PTI on Monday that "there is a Supreme Court order that has said that the

BRS MLC Kavitha *PHOTO: PTI*

ED cannot summon Kavitha in this case".

However, ED sources have said that the BRS leader had obtained a temporary relief from the apex court last year and it is not valid now.

The federal agency might issue a fresh summons to her. The sources said the ED will take a decision in this context soon. —*PTI*

Seat sharing among INDIA bloc will be solved: Rahul

CHIEPHOBOZOU, 16 JAN

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed confidence on Tuesday that the seat-sharing issues among the INDIA bloc partners will be resolved and claimed that the coalition will defeat the BJP in this year's Lok Sabha polls.

He also said there is mutual respect and affection between the leaders of the INDIA bloc, which he asserted is "an ideological formation" that is in opposition to the idea of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Addressing a press conference here in Nagaland during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, Gandhi said the status of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) is "very good".

"We are in conversation with our partners. The issue of seat sharing is being taken up. Those discussions are ongoing and I think they are going quite well. Let us see where those discussions end.

"Broadly, a lot of those discussions are quite simple. They are not complex discussions and are relatively easy discussions to have. So I am quite confident that they will be resolved," he said.

Asked about reports that Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (United) chief Nitish Kumar was upset after the last meeting of the INDIA bloc, Gandhi said the media "overplays" these things and does not show the mood and brotherhood during the coalition's meetings.

Rahul : Temple consecration a 'BJP function' with 'election flavour'

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Tuesday that the Ram temple consecration event in Ayodhya has been made into a "Narendra Modi and RSS-BJP function" with an "election flavour", as he strongly defended the decision of his party's top leaders to decline the invite to the ceremony.

Gandhi's remarks at a press conference during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra here came days after the Congress top brass declined the invitation to the event at the Ram temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. —*PTI*

MOHABBAT KI DUKAN

Riders for RaGa's bus need 'special' ticket

KHUZAMA , 16 JAN

Rahul addresses supporters in Kohima *PHOTO: PTI*

Anybody who wants to board Rahul Gandhi's 'Mohabbat ki Dukaan' bus for the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra must get a 'special ticket' which has a picture of the former Congress president in his yatra avatar printed on it.

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh on Monday posed with the 'ticket' which has a T-shirt and trouser-clad Gandhi in a walking pose and is autographed by him.

In a post in Hindi on X, Ramesh said, "This is the ticket for the 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' bus in which Rahul Gandhi is travelling in the Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra."

"Those who want to meet and talk to Rahul Gandhi in this journey of justice against the injustice of the last 10 years have been given such tickets and called in the bus," he said.

Gandhi is travelling in a custom-made Volvo bus that has a hydraulic lift for the leader to address crowds from atop the vehicle.

The bus has 'Mohabbat ki Dukaan' printed on it and Congress leaders are calling the vehicle 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' on wheels.

Gandhi had first used the term 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' during the Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir Bharat Jodo Yatra, saying he was opening 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan (shop for spreading love)' in 'Nafrat ka Bazaar (market of hate)'. —*PTI*

Ensure Mukhtar's security: SC directs UP

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed Uttar Pradesh authorities to continue with the security measures to ensure that gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who is currently lodged in Banda jail in the state, is not visited with any "unforeseen situation".

The apex court, which perused the chart placed before it indicating the security arrangements made for Mukhtar Ansari, observed they appeared to be "formidable enough".

A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra was hearing a plea filed by Umar Ansari, son of Mukhtar Ansari, raising the issue of safety and security of his father even within the jail premises and also to transfer him to any other prison outside Uttar Pradesh.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) K M Nataraj, appearing for Uttar Pradesh, placed before the bench the details about number of cases pending against Mukhtar Ansari at different stages and on the security arrangements.

He said details of cases involved those which are at the stage of investigation and also at trial stage.Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioner, requested the bench to adjourn the matter to July.The bench observed that the ASG has brought to its notice certain measures.It noted that Mukhtar Ansari was earlier permitted to attend the court hearings through virtual mode. —*PTI*

Poverty headcount in Assam down by 25% in 3 yrs: CM

GUWAHATI, 16 JAN

Poverty headcount in Assam has reduced by 25 per cent in last three years, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday citing NITI Aayog data.

More than 80 lakh people in the state have 'escaped poverty' with the state experiencing 'most prosperous era in modern history', he maintained.

Citing NITI Aayog data, Sarma wrote on X: "80 lakh people in the State have escaped poverty under Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji's government. In last 3 years poverty headcount ratio has come down by 25 per cent".Maintaining that the state is 'experiencing its most prosperous era in modern history', he added, "We are currently on a rapid growth trajectory that will see Assam make a significant contribution to nation building by emerging as one the top five states in the country".Sarma said the poverty headcount ratio in the state has come down from 36.97 per cent in 2013-14 to 14.47 per cent in 2022-23. —*PTI*

TEMPLE ROW

Chitra faces cyberattack over Ram hymns

T'PURAM 16 JAN

National award-winning playback singer KS Chitra has come under social media attack for her recent video message urging people to chant Lord Ram hymns during the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on 22 January.

However, all major political parties, including the ruling CPI (M), Opposition Congress and the BJP denounced the attack against the eminent singer and extended support to her, saying that she has the right to express her opinion.

In a brief video circulated on social media platforms in the last two days, the eminent singer asked everyone to chant the 'Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama' mantra at 12.20 pm, when the consecration ceremony is held.

Singer Chitra *PHOTO: PTI*

She also asked people to light five-wick lamps in their houses in the evening on the same day to mark the occasion.

There were many social media users who extended support to the singer, saying she has every right and the freedom to express her opinion.

In a Facebook post, writer Indu Menon criticised Chitra and asked her to implement the ritual and lamp lighting in her home only.

She said Chitra has freedom of expression and freedom to stand on the sides she likes.

"Innocently celebrating a cause that led to genocide and racism may seem harmless, but it's actually a painful experience," Menon expressed in the Facebook post.However, well-known singer G Venugopal, who strongly supported Chitra in the row, said the online remarks insulted her, which was 'disheartening'. —*PTI*

Boy dies after kite string slits throat in Kota

KOTA, 16 JAN

A 12-year-old boy died after his throat was slit by a glass-coated kite string while five others were injured in similar incidents in the district, police said on Tuesday. Surendra Bheel, a student of class 5, was flying kites along with his friends on the rooftop of his house on Monday when the incident took place. He was rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead, assistant sub-inspector Bhanwar Singh said. Five others, including a 60-year-old man, Ramlal Meena was critically injured after a kite string slashed his neck in Satur village when he was returning home on a motorcycle on Sunday. Meena has received 13 stitches and has been admitted to a hospital in Kota, his family said. Ahead of the festival of Makar Sankranti, districts collectors of Kota, Bundi and Jhalawar had issued orders banning glass-coated strings or Chinese strings. Makar Sankranti, is traditionally associated with kite flying. *—PTI*

National Defence Academy turns 75

PUNE, 16 JAN

The National Defence Academy (NDA), which has produced world-class military leaders for the Indian Armed Forces, celebrated its 75th anniversary here on Tuesday. Since its inception in 1954, the academy has achieved the distinction of being an institution where military leaders were trained together to face the complex and technology-driven wars that the country has been fighting with its neighbours since independence. In his valedictory address to a gathering at Habibullah Hall, General Anil Chauhan, the Chief of defence staff (CDS), from the 58th course of the NDA, said, "I joined the NDA 46 years ago as a 16-year-old boy straight from school who had no military background. We watched the film 'Cradle of Leadership' then. After 46 years, when I look back, I think the NDA is a bit more just than a 'cradle of leadership.' It is more than just an academy for the military cadets."The academy was a nursery where boys turned into men and now women also, he said.*—PTI*

Ker court rules on recording talaq by Muslim women

KOCHI, 16 JAN

The Kerala High Court has held that a divorced Muslim woman need not be sent to a court of law for recording the talaq if it is otherwise in order as per the personal law. Justice PV Kunhikrishnan said that merely because a woman registered her marriage as per the Kerala Registration of Marriages (Common) Rules, 2008, she need not be dragged to a court of law for recording her divorce if it was obtained as per her personal law. The officer concerned can record the talaq without insisting on a court order. The order and observations came on a divorced Muslim woman's plea seeking directions to the Local Registrar of Marriages to record her divorce in the marriage register.*—PTI*

Panel to decide if Tehreek-e-Hurriyat should be banned

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Centre on Tuesday set up a tribunal consisting of a Delhi High Court judge to adjudicate if there is sufficient ground for declaring pro-Pakistan separatist Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu and Kashmir, as an unlawful association.In a notification, the Union Home Ministry said the Central government constituted the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal consisting of Justice Sachin Datta, Judge, High Court of Delhi, for the purpose of adjudicating whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH), Jammu and Kashmir, as an unlawful association.The organisation was declared banned as it has been fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India propaganda in the Union territory.*—PTI*

Denying sex in marriage is mental cruelty: HC

HC said denial of sex is a valid ground for divorce

JABALPUR, 16 JAN

A bench of Justices granted divorce to a man on the ground that his wife refused to consummate marriage *PHOTO: PTI*

Refusal to consummate marriage and denial of physical intimacy amounts to mental cruelty and is a valid ground for divorce, the Madhya Pradesh High Court has held.

A division bench of Justices Sheel Nagu and Vinay Saraf on 3 January granted divorce to a man on the ground that his wife had refused to consummate the marriage and had denied physical intimacy with him since their wedding in 2006.

"The non-consummation of marriage and denial of physical intimacy amounts to mental cruelty," the high court said in its order.As per the appeal filed by the man, he married the woman in July 2006. However, his wife refused to consummate the marriage as she claimed that she was forced into the marriage and was allegedly in love with someone else and requested her husband to unite them.

The man said he left for the US the same month, and in September, the woman went to live with her family and never returned.In 2011, the man filed an application before a family court in Bhopal seeking divorce. In 2014, the family court rejected the plea.

Court, noted that on several occasions, the woman refused to consummate the marriage and have physical relations with her husband.While quashing the family court order, the high court said the lower court had wrongly held that failure on the part of the wife to consummate the marriage cannot be a ground for divorce.

"The appellant solemnised the marriage. It was already decided that he would leave India in a short period. During this period, the appellant was hopeful to consummate the marriage but the same was denied by the respondent and certainly the said act of the respondent amounts to mental cruelty," the HC said. *— PTI*

A cart-puller amid dense fog during a cold winter morning, in New Delhi on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Fog hits trains, planes in North

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

- Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Monday that all stakeholders are working round-the-clock to minimise fog-related disruptions

A thick layer of fog cloaked the Indo-Gangetic plains in North India on Tuesday, with poor visibility disrupting road and rail traffic. Satellite imagery showed a dense elongated band of fog stretching from Punjab to the northeast.

A spokesperson for the railways said 30 trains arriving in Delhi were delayed by up to six hours due to foggy weather. At the Palam Observatory near the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, visibility was limited to only 50m at 5.30am. Early morning foggy weather in north and northeast India has heavily impacted road, rail and air traffic over the last fortnight.

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Monday that all stakeholders are working round-the-clock to minimise fog-related disruptions.

As the blinding fog lowered visibility levels to zero metres at several places, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) advised people to avoid unnecessary travel and take precautions while driving.

The IMD said that dense to very dense fog conditions are likely to continue prevailing over north India for the next three days. It said that cold day to severe cold day conditions would persist over the northern plains for two more days.

"Cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely to continue over northwest India for three days," it said.

In the plains, the meteorological office declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to four degrees Celsius or when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees or below and is 4.5 notches below the normal. A severe cold day is when the maximum is 6.5 degrees Celsius or more below the normal. *—PTI*

Truck collision amid fog leads to vehicle pile-up

NOIDA, 16 JAN

Four people were injured in a multi-vehicle pile-up in Greater Noida on Tuesday amid dense fog in the region, police said. The accident took place in the Dadri police station area around 8.45 am, they said.

"A canter truck collided with another truck while taking a left turn shortly after crossing an underpass. Subsequently 10 more vehicles piled up. Four people were left injured in the incident," a police spokesperson said. Those injured are Kailash Prashant, Apoorv Parmar, Keshav Singh and Mohan Swaroop, according to the police.

"The injured were taken to the community health centre (CHC) in Dadri from where Prashant, Parmar and Singh were discharged after first aid" the spokesperson said. The fourth person Swaroop is undergoing treatment at the CHC, the official said. The police said traffic movement on the road was briefly disrupted due to the accident but the damaged vehicles were soon removed and the route cleared for normal passage of vehicles. *—PTI*

HC bats for strong system to curb cybercrime

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Stressing that cybercrime is a genuine problem that is troubling everyone, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday suggested that authorities adopt a simple process of filing complaints for such cases, increase awareness among people on the "important" issue, among other steps to check the menace.

The high court said the policing system has to be reformed and police have to gear up to deal with these new challenges and be updated with new technology.It observed that scamsters do not discriminate among their targets and they do not care whether it is a lawyer, judge, businessman or any other person.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora said, "Cybercrime is a genuine problem today. Everyone is getting troubled. This is something unique happening now. We don't know what the authorities can do about this. Only awareness can work. Awareness is needed."

The plea filed by lawyer Akshya and Urvashi Bhatia said, "Digital arrest scam poses a greater severe threat..." It is of grave concern as these scams have "now infiltrated into the very fabric of our criminal justice system, endangering its integrity and functionality", it said.

Petitioners claimed that websites of central as well as state cyber cells are inactive and do not post anything to increase awareness amongst people "Suppose someone succeeds in transmitting money. Money has to be blocked immediately. It cannot be done till you have a digital system in place. Otherwise, money will cross the boundaries of this country. You won't be able to reach it," the court told the police's counsel. "By assuming false identities, they are not only exploiting the trust placed in these institutions but also eroding public confidence in the criminal justice system," it said. *—PTI*

FARMERS' PROTEST

Traffic jam at Chilla border due to farmers' protest in Noida on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Min issues notice after flyers eat food at tarmac

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

- Both IndiGo and MIAL were not proactive in anticipating the situation and making the appropriate facilitation arrangements for passengers at the airport

Aviation security watchdog Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has issued show cause notices to IndiGo and Mumbai airport operator Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) over the incident of passengers having food on the airport tarmac as soon as their diverted Goa- Delhi flight landed after a long delay on Sunday, according to official sources.

Both IndiGo and MIAL were not proactive in anticipating the situation and making the appropriate facilitation arrangements for passengers at the airport, as per the notices issued by the BCAS.

The sources said the aircraft was allotted a remote bay C-33 instead of a Contact Stand, an aircraft parking stand that is suitable for walking passengers to and from an aircraft from an allocated boarding gate. This further added to passenger woes and deprived them the opportunity to avail basic facilities like rest rooms and refreshments at the terminal, they added.

After a video of passengers eating on the tarmac at Mumbai airport went viral on social media on Monday, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia held a meeting with all ministry officials at around 12.30 am on Tuesday, the sources said.

—PTI

Video of passengers having food on the airport tarmac after a long delay on Sunday went viral *PHOTO: PTI*

'FOR SCANDULOUS CLAIMS'

SC asks lawyer to file apology to judges

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed a lawyer, who was sentenced to six months in jail after being held guilty of criminal contempt for making "scandalous, unwarranted and baseless imputations" against several judges of the Delhi High Court and district courts in the national capital, to tender a proper unconditional apology to the judges he had targeted, saying it is not satisfied with the nature of his apology.

The Delhi High Court had, on 9 January, held the lawyer guilty of contempt of court and sentenced him to six months in jail, besides imposing a fine of Rs 2,000 on him. It had also directed that he be taken into custody and handed over to the superintendent of the Tihar jail.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud granted further opportunity to the lawyer to file a proper apology. "This is not an apology. This is a contrived apology.... How can he say that it was unintentional and bonafide? He must file a proper apology," the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said after perusing the apology filed by the lawyer.

As the hearing commenced, the counsel appearing for the lawyer placed on record an unconditional affidavit and said his client had also tendered a verbal apology and has already been in jail for a week now. The top court granted him further opportunity to file an apology and posted the matter for hearing on 19 January. Court noted that since the lawyer who made the allegations was an officer of the court, it was necessary to check such actions with a "firm hand". *—PTI*

Nihang kills man over 'sacrilege' at gurdwara

PHAGWARA, 16 JAN

- Speaking to reporters, the Nihang claimed that he acted in self-defence after he was attacked by the unidentified man

A Nihang was arrested after he allegedly killed an unidentified man on the premises of a gurdwara here on Tuesday for "trying to commit" sacrilege, police said.

The man, identified as Ramandeep Singh, posted a video on social media in which he took responsibility for the killing and also claimed that he acted in self-defence. Nihangs are members of a Sikh sect and usually wear blue robes and carry traditional weapons.

Following the incident, senior police officials, including Additional Director General of Police Gurinder Singh Dhillon, rushed to the historic Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi Chaura Khooh here.

The victim was in his 20s and his body has been sent for a post-mortem examination, police said. Speaking to reporters, the Nihang claimed that he acted in self-defence after he was attacked by the unidentified man.

While the Nihang has been booked under section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code, section 295A (outraging religious feelings) of the IPC has also been invoked against the man who was killed.

—PTI

'Careful of mefenamic acid's effects in Meftal'

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

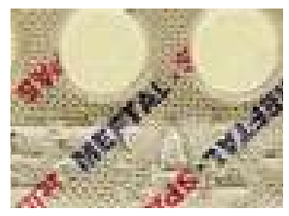


PHOTO: PTI

In the backdrop of a caution by the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) against mefenamic acid, a major component of painkiller meftal, the medicine's manufacturer on Tuesday said the alert seeks to advise doctors and patients to monitor the possibility of an adverse reaction of the drug.

"The alert issued by IPC was to advise doctors and patients to monitor the possibility of an adverse drug reaction of mefenamic acid, which does not in any way impact the safety, efficacy and high quality of the brands that are established and supported by clinical studies," Blue Cross Laboratories, which makes meftal and meftal-spas, said in a statement.The IPC on 30 November had issued an alert on mefenamic acid stating that a preliminary analysis of adverse drug reactions from the Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI) database revealed drug reactions with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) syndrome.If such a reaction is eThe company said mefenamic acid, apart from India (as meftal and meftal-spas) is being prescribed in countries like the USA, the UK, Japan etc. for more than four decades with billions of doses administered and has benefitted millions of patients. *—PTI*

IN GUJARAT

Researchers find 800 BCE old settlement

KOLKATA, 16 JAN

Researchers from IIT Kharagpur, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Deccan College have found evidence of human settlement that is as old as 800 BCE (Before Christian Era) at Vadnagar in Gujarat.

An IIT Kharagpur statement said that the excavation at Vadnagar indicates that the rise and fall of different kingdoms in 3,000 years and recurrent invasions of India by central Asian warriors were driven by severe change in climate like rainfall or droughts.

"Excavation in its several deep trenches revealed the presence of seven cultural stages (periods) namely, Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian or Shaka-Kshatrapas, Hindu-Solankis, Sultanate-Mughal (Islamic) to Gaekwad-British colonial rule and the city is continuing even today. One of the oldest Buddhist monasteries has been discovered during our excavation."

PHOTO: PTI

"We found characteristic archaeological artefacts, potteries, copper, gold, silver and iron objects and intricately designed bangles. We also found coin moulds of Greek king Appollodatus during the Indo-Greek rule at Vadnagar," said ASI archaeologist Abhijit Ambekar, co-author of the paper who led the excavation from 2016. He claimed that the evidence makes Vadnagar the oldest living city within a single fortification unearthed so far in India.

"Some of our recent unpublished radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement could be as old as 1400 BCE contemporary to the very late phase of the post-urban Harappan period, IIT professor Anindya Sarkar said. *—PTI*

Jallikattu: 42 hurt, best man, bull get 1 car each

MADURAI, 16 JAN

About 42 people, including 14 tamers and 16 spectators were injured in the second major event of the Pongal 2024 Jallikattu season held at Palamedu here on Tuesday.

The best tamer who embraced 14 bulls and the owner of the best bull that stubbornly refused to be subdued were each presented with the coveted Chief Minister's car as a prize.

Frenzied spectators cheered loudly whenever the dauntless tamers embraced the bulls' hump and held on as the bulls ran in the arena. They were equally exhilarated when the bulls pounced at the Vaadivaasal (entry point where the bulls are let out into the arena), ferociously shook the sharp horns, and darted without allowing anyone to approach.Atleast half-a-dozen young tamers were tossed by the raging bulls when they missed the hump. *—PTI*

PINK BLOSSOMS

Pink Tabebuia flowers bloom at Cubbon Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The city is a sight to behold at this time of the year ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

'World not yet prepared for future pandemic'

Praising India and other countries for contributing to a global pandemic fund, a top official of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on Tuesday said the world is yet not fully prepared to deal with any future pandemic and a lot more work needs to be done.

Speaking to PTI on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, where 'Disease X' is one of the key areas of discussions, Christopher J Elias said we have learnt our lessons after Covid-19 but further efforts and discussions are needed, including on financing requirements.

"A really important discussion had started nearly eight years ago after the Ebola outbreak and that discussion cake into very clear focus after Covid-19 that the world needs to be better prepared," he said.

"The world needs to be ready for infections and diseases that we know such as influenza but also diseases that we don't know and may be new such as Disease X. But I don't think we are fully prepared yet," he added.

Elias noted that there have been a lot of talks on what needs to be done for the world to be fully prepared.

The WHO is in the process of negotiating an accord, trying to bring countries together on what needs to be done and how it is going to be financed, he said.

"We had a wake-up call from Covid-19 and we are relatively better prepared than we were four years ago but we are not fully prepared. There is a lot more work to be done and there is a lot more financing that needs to be arranged and those would be a lot more discussions over the course of next one year," he said.

Talking about financing requirements Elias said that after the Covid-19, an IMF report suggested that we might need USD 10 billion a year to make sure that the entire world is adequately prepared for future pandemics.

"At Indonesian G20 two years ago, a pandemic fund was created and many nations of the world including India contributed to that fund. So, that's a start and it has raised about USD 2 billion so far but obviously it's not everything that is needed," he said.

An IMF report suggested that we might need USD 10 billion a year to make sure that the entire world is adequately prepared for future pandemics ***PHOTO: PTI***

On the new annual budget of the Foundation, Elias said they are very excited that the board of trustees of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has approved our largest budget ever of USD 8.6 billion for 2024.

"We think it's really important that we are leading in helping to improve global health and development at a time when there is so much pressure on the resources around the world.

"This budget is about USD 1 billion higher than what was our budget in 2021. So we are increasing our budget significantly and we hope that many others also do so.

> ● WHO is in the process of negotiating an accord, trying to bring countries together on what needs to be done.Talking about financing requirements Elias said that after the Covid-19, an IMF report suggested that we might need USD 10 billion a year to make sure that the entire world is adequately prepared for future pandemics

"Because this is the time when we have seen many successes in global health and a lot of opportunities are there for continued successes," he added.

Asked about areas where these funding will go, Elias said there are many that the budget covers including finishing the job on polio eradication.

"India eradicated polio more than ten years ago but there are a few other places in the world where we have to finish the job and we are optimistic that in a year or two we will be able to eradicate polio from the world," he said.

The foundation will also continue to work towards improving immunization and to reach those areas where people need the help the most are among our key priorities, he added. *—PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

Climate crisis can lead to 14.5M deaths by 2050: WEF

Disasters intensified by the climate crisis may lead to USD 12.5 trillion economic losses and 14.5 million deaths worldwide by 2050, a new World Economic Forum analysis warned on Tuesday.

But, there is still time for global stakeholders to take decisive and strategic action to counter these forecasts and mitigate the health impacts of climate change globally, it said.

The report, Quantifying the Impact of Climate Change on Human Health, developed in collaboration with Oliver Wyman, was released at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024.

It analysed the climate crisis through a new lens by providing a detailed picture of the indirect impact climate change will have on human health, the global economy and healthcare systems around the world.

"While there has been much discussion about the impact of climate change on nature and the global economy, some of the most pressing consequences of the Earth's rising temperatures will be on human health and the global healthcare system," said Shyam Bishen, Head of the Centre for Health and Healthcare and Member of the Executive Committee at the WEF.

"Recent progress will be lost unless critical emission reduction and mitigation measures are improved, and decisive global action is taken to build climate resilient and adaptable health systems," he added.

The analysis is based on scenarios developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the most likely trajectory for the planet's rising average temperature, 2.5 degrees to 2.9 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

Floods were found to pose the highest acute risk of climate-induced mortality, accounting for 8.5 million deaths by 2050 ***PHOTO: REUTERS***

The report analysed six major climate-driven event categories as key multi-pronged drivers of negative health impacts -- floods, droughts, heat waves, tropical storms, wildfires and rising sea levels.

Floods were found to pose the highest acute risk of climate-induced mortality, accounting for 8.5 million deaths by 2050.

Droughts, indirectly linked to extreme heat, are the second-highest cause of mortality, with an anticipated 3.2 million deaths.

Heat waves take the highest economic toll at an estimated USD 7.1 trillion by 2050 due to the loss in productivity.

Excess deaths attributed to air pollution, caused by fine particulate and ozone pollution, are expected to be the largest contributor to premature death, with almost 9 million deaths a year.Climate change will also trigger a catastrophic rise across several climate-sensitive disease outcomes, including vector-borne disease, which will likely impact previously less affected regions, such as Europe and the United States, the WEF said.By 2050, an additional 500 million people may be at risk of exposure to vector-borne diseases, the report finds.

"The climate crisis is a health crisis, and it is driving a vicious cycle of disease, economic devastation and suffering. It is clear from this report that we are still to understand the full impact," said Vanessa Kerry, CEO of Seed Global Health and WHO Special Envoy for Climate Change and Health.

"If we fail to act, not only will the death toll be staggering, but we also risk losing progress made over decades to improve health outcomes around the world. Countries least able to afford these shocks and who contribute the least to global emissions will be impacted the most," she added.

The report warned that climate change will further entrench global health inequities, with the most vulnerable populations, including women, youth, elderly, lower-income groups and hard-to-reach communities, the most affected.

Regions like Africa and southern Asia face heightened vulnerability to climate change impacts exacerbated by existing resource limitations, adequate infrastructure and essential medical equipment, further complicating their ability to address and adapt to environmental challenges, it added. *—PTI*

Heat waves take the highest economic toll at an estimated USD 7.1 trillion by 2050 due to the loss in productivity ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

Not allowing AI for political campaigning: Open AI ahead of polls

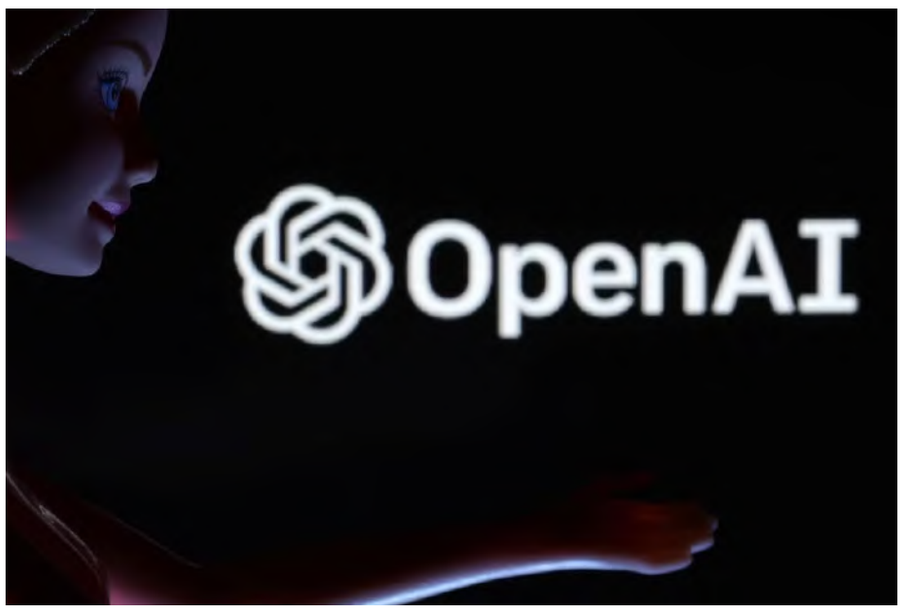
Ahead of general elections, US-based artificial intelligence research organisation OpenAI has said it will not allow its AI to be used for political campaigning and continue to work to prevent misleading 'deepfakes' and chatbots impersonating candidates.

In a blog post, Sam Altman-led firm said it has made a number of policy changes to prevent its generative AI-based technologies such as ChatGPT, Dall-e and the rest from undermining the "democratic process" during upcoming elections.

"As we prepare for elections in 2024 across the world's largest democracies, our approach is to continue our platform safety work by elevating accurate voting information, enforcing measured policies, and improving transparency," it said.

Besides India, the US and UK will also go to the polls this year.

"Protecting the integrity of elections requires collaboration from every corner of the democratic process, and we want to make sure our technology is not used in a way that could undermine this process," OpenAI said.



Ahead of general elections, US-based artificial intelligence research organisation OpenAI has said it will not allow its AI to be used for political campaigning ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

"We want to make sure that our AI systems are built, deployed, and used safely."

Listing out measures it is taking to prevent abuse, OpenAI said it is working to "anticipate and prevent relevant abuse - such as misleading 'deepfakes', scaled influence operations, or chatbots impersonating candidates."

"Prior to releasing new systems, we red team them, engage users and external partners for feedback, and build safety mitigations to reduce the potential for harm," it said, adding it has been iterating on tools to improve factual accuracy, reduce bias, and decline certain requests.

For instance, Dall-e has guardrails to decline requests that ask for image generation of real people, including candidates.

Stating that it was still working to understand how effective its tools might be for personalized persuasion, OpenAI said, "Until we know more, we don't allow people to build applications for political campaigning and lobbying."

"People want to know and trust that they are interacting with a real person, business, or government. For that reason, we don't allow builders to create chatbots that pretend to be real people (e.g., candidates) or institutions (e.g., local government)," it said.

Also, it does not allow applications that deter people from participation in democratic processes.

"Better transparency around image provenance - including the ability to detect which tools were used to produce an image - can empower voters to assess an image with trust and confidence in how it was made," it said.

OpenAI said it is experimenting with a provenance classifier, a new tool for detecting images generated by Dall-e.

"Our internal testing has shown promising early results, even where images have been subject to common types of modifications. We plan to soon make it available to our first group of testers including journalists, platforms, and researchers—for feedback."

Also, ChatGPT is integrating with existing sources of information and users will start to get access to real-time news reporting globally, including attribution and links.

> ● Listing out measures it is taking to prevent abuse, OpenAI said it is working to "anticipate and prevent relevant abuse - such as misleading 'deepfakes', scaled influence operations, or chatbots impersonating candidates.Also, it does not allow applications that deter people from participation in democratic processes

"Transparency around the origin of information and balance in news sources can help voters better assess information and decide for themselves what they can trust," it said.

"We look forward to continuing to work with and learn from partners to anticipate and prevent potential abuse of our tools in the lead up to this year's global elections." *—PTI*

8 dead, 100 missing after latest Nigeria boat accident

ABUJA, 16 JAN

Eight passengers were confirmed dead and an estimated 100 were missing after their overloaded boat capsized in north-central Nigeria, the emergency services said on Tuesday. It is the latest in a series of deadly boat accidents that increasingly point to regulatory failures. The passengers were being conveyed from Niger state's Borgu district to a market in the neighbouring Kebbi state on Monday afternoon when the boat overturned in the Niger River, according to Niger State Emergency Management Agency spokesman Ibrahim Audu. "The boat was overloaded so the strong wind affected them," Audu said. He said the boat's capacity is 100 passengers but it was estimated to be carrying a much higher number, in addition to bags of grain, making it difficult to control when it began to sink. *—AP*

PHOTO: ANI

School used as training centre attacked in Pak

BALOCHISTAN, 16 JAN

Ahead of the general elections, a training centre for polling staff was attacked by unknown men in the Kharan district of Balochistan, as reported by Dawn. The premises of Government Model High School in Kharan were being used as a training centre where the polling staff was getting trained and came under attack on Monday. According to the officials, the assailants launched the attack on the school building while officers from various government departments were undergoing training inside. Reportedly, a handgrenade was thrown into the school premises, which exploded in an open area within the building, according to Dawn. The blast shattered the windowpanes of some classrooms, causing disturbances in the vicinity. *—ANI*

1,000 tourists stranded in China due to avalanches

BEIJING, 16 JAN

Around 1,000 tourists remain stranded in a remote holiday village after avalanches hit China's northwestern Xinjiang region with metres-high snow and fickle weather impeding evacuation, state TV reported on Tuesday. Road access to Hemu village, a scenic destination near the borders of Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia where the tourists were trapped, has been cut off by avalanches for several days now. The village is situated in Xinjiang's Altay Prefecture where continuous snowfall in some areas has lasted 10 days, it said. The heavy snowfall triggered dozens of avalanches along large sections of highways in the Altay mountains leading to the Kanas scenic area, and some tourists were lifted by helicopter to safety, Chinese state media outlets reported over the weekend. *—Reuters*

7 Jan poll ensured 'people's right to vote': B'desh PM

DHAKA, 16 JAN

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday said the absolute triumph of her Awami League party in the recent general election was the "victory of Bangladesh, its people, and the continuation of democracy and development." Hasina-led Awami League (AL) won the January 7 polls with a handsome victory amid a boycott by the principal opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). The prime minister was addressing several hundred expatriate AL leaders from across the globe gathered at her official residence 'Ganabhaban' here to congratulate her on her party's fourth consecutive win in the 12th parliamentary election. *—PTI*

Vivek Ramaswamy quits US prez race, endorses Trump

He finished 4th in the Iowa caucuses along with 3 delegates

WASHINGTON, 16 JAN

Vivek Ramaswamy and Donald Trump *PHOTO: X*

Indian-American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy who dropped out of the 2024 Republican presidential race after finishing fourth in the Iowa caucuses, has endorsed former President Donald Trump and urged Republican voters to put an "America First patriot" in the White House.

Taking to social media platform X, Ramaswamy stated, "This entire campaign is about speaking the TRUTH. We did not achieve our goal tonight, & we need an America-First patriot in the White House. The people spoke loud & clear about who they want. Tonight I am suspending my campaign and endorsing Donald J Trump and will do everything I can to make sure he is the next US President."

The 38-year-old political novice said at a press conference at Des Moines, "There is no path for me to be the next President absent things that we don't want to see happen in this country," as reported by the Washington Post.

"We did not achieve the surprise we wanted to deliver tonight," Ramaswamy said. Ramaswamy finished fourth in Iowa, according to CNN News projections, well behind Trump, Florida Goveror Ron DeSantis and former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley.

> The 38-year-old political novice said at a press conference at Des Moines, "There is no path for me to be the next president absent things that we don't want to see happen in this country," as reported by the Washington Post

Trump cements frontrunner status to face Biden with record win

Donald Trump's iron grip on the Republican Party has been clear since the day he announced he would make another run for the White House 14 months ago. It can be seen in the party's ideological shift even further to the right on cultural issues and, especially, on immigration policy.

Iowa Republicans were a clear reflection of that on Monday night, delivering the former president an emphatic victory. They channeled his anger, and his view that basically everything President Joe Biden has done has been a "disaster." About 9 in 10 voters said they want upheaval or substantial change in how the government operates, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 1,500 voters who said they planned to take part in the caucuses.

As clear-cut as his win was, though, Iowa has not historically played the role of kingmaker in the Republican nominating process. New Hampshire's voters don't take their cues from Iowa. This was the least suspenseful Iowa caucus in modern memory because Trump has essentially been running as an incumbent president. He's convinced many Republicans he didn't really lose the 2020 election to Biden, repeatedly making false claims, and has dominated the race the way someone still in office does.

—AP/ ANI

Nikki Haley says she is the last hope of stopping Trump

WASHINGTON, 16 JAN

Nikki Haley *PHOTO: PTI*

Indian-American Nikki Haley, who finished third in the Iowa caucuses, has said that she is the only Republican candidate who could take on frontrunner Donald Trump and incumbent President Joe Biden and avert a "Trump-Biden nightmare".

The Iowa caucuses on Monday formally kicked off the beginning of the long process by which the Republicans and Democrats choose their nominees for the presidential election on 5 November.

Nikki Haley, the former US Ambassador to the UN, came a close third with nearly 20 per cent of the votes polled.

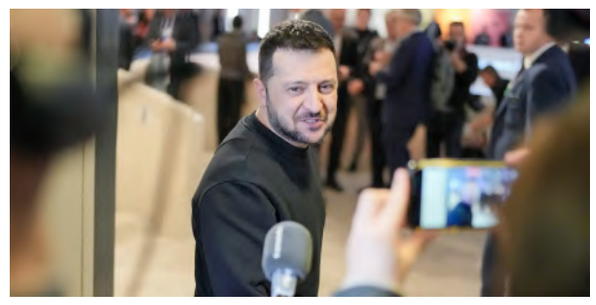
Former US president Trump won the caucus with more than 50 per cent of the votes, while Florida Governor Ron DeSantis came in second with 21 per cent.

Fellow Indian-American Vivek Ramaswamy secured 7.7 per cent of the total votes polled and suspended his presidential campaign.

The two-time South Carolina governor said her presidential campaign is the best hope to avert a rematch between Trump and incumbent President Biden, a Democrat, in the presidential election. "Our campaign is the last best hope of stopping the Trump-Biden nightmare," the 51-year-old politician told her cheering supporters in West Des Moines, Iowa, late on Monday. *—PTI*

PUT AN END TO THIS WAR

Switzerland asks Zelenskyy to host peace summit



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talks to reporters at the Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

DAVOS, 16 JAN

Swiss President Viola Amherd said on Monday, during a visit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Bern, that her country has offered to organise a peace summit that aims to help bring an end to Ukraine's ongoing war with Russia.

"I confirmed to him that Switzerland is ready to organize a conference," Amherd said during a joint press conference with Zelenskyy. "We have agreed that we will examine the details of the next steps in depth to ensure that the peace process is a success." The two Presidents said the Ukrainian and Swiss teams will begin preparations for the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland as early as Tuesday. No details were provided about when or how such a summit could take place, and Russia hasn't been involved in the process.

"This summit is intended to infuse the necessary energy into everything that has already been achieved and to determine that the end of the war must be fair, and the restoration of the strength of international law complete," Zelenskyy said.

Talks of a peace summit come as Ukrainian military chiefs said Monday their forces had shot down a Russian early warning and control plane and a key command centre aircraft, which if confirmed would be a feat for Ukraine in the almost two-year war.

On Sunday, Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, took part in Swiss-hosted talks in Davos among dozens of national envoys about Zelenskyy's 10-point peace formula which ultimately aims to feed into the possible peace summit. As for who might attend, Zelenskyy said Ukraine was open "to all countries in the world that respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity ... So draw conclusions about whom we invite".

"It is important for us to show that the whole world is against the aggression of Russia and the whole world is for a fair peace," Zelenskyy said. *—PTI*

Iran launches missile strikes in Iraq, Syria

TEHRAN, 16 JAN

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched ballistic missiles at what it claimed were Israeli "spy headquarters" in Iraq's Kurdish region and hit targets allegedly linked to ISIL (ISIS) in northern Syria, saying it was defending its security and countering terrorism.

At least eight explosions were heard in Erbil, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, early on Tuesday. Four people were killed and six were wounded, according to the regional security council.

"Ballistic missiles were used to destroy espionage centres and gatherings of anti-Iranian terrorist groups in the region," the IRGC said, according to state media.

The Iraqi government condemned what it called Iran's "aggression" on Erbil that led to civilian casualties in residential areas, calling it a violation of the country's sovereignty and the security of its people, according to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Turkish air strikes target northern Iraq and Syria

Turkey's military has carried out air raids against Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq and Syria.

The overnight air raids destroyed 23 targets, the Turkish Ministry of National Defence said on Tuesday. The operation extends a recent escalation in violence across Turkey's southern border, as regional tension continues to rise amid Israel's bombardment of Gaza. The upswing in the conflict began on Friday when nine Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes with Kurdistan Workers Party fighters in northern Iraq. Ankara responded with air attacks and military operations in the area, as well as in northern Syria.

The latest air raids were carried out on Monday at 10pm in Metina, Gara, Hakurk and Qandil of northern Iraq, close to the city of Erbil, as well as in northern Syria.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Emergency teams carry out search and rescue operations after missiles target Erbil, in Iraq *PHOTO: ANADOLU AGENCY*

WHEN DREAMS ARE BIG

A four-year-old girl from the Czech Republic has made history by becoming the youngest ever person to reach Mount Everest's base camp. According to Metro, the girl named Zara managed to make the 170-mile journey to base camp at an elevation of 17,598 feet *PHOTO: SASA JEDE'S INSTAGRAM*

North Korea will no longer pursue reconciliation with South, says Kim

SEOUL, 16 JAN

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country would no longer pursue reconciliation with South Korea and called for rewriting the North's constitution to eliminate the idea of shared statehood between the war-divided countries, state media said Tuesday.

The historic step to discard a decades-long pursuit of unification, which was based on a sense of national homogeneity shared by both Koreas, comes amid heightened tensions where the pace of both Kim's weapons development and the South's military exercises with the United States have intensified in a tit-for-tat.

North Korea also abolished the key government agencies that had been tasked with managing relations with South Korea in a decision made during a meeting of the country's rubber-stamp parliament on Monday, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

The Supreme People's Assembly said the two Koreas are locked in an "acute confrontation" and that it would be a serious mistake for the North to regard the South as a partner in diplomacy.

"The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, the National Economic Cooperation Bureau and the (Diamond Mountain) International Tourism Administration, tools which existed for (North-South) dialogue, negotiations and cooperation, are abolished," the assembly said in a statement. *—AP*

Israel Gaza war: Hamas video claims to show dead hostages

PALESTINE, 16 JAN

Hamas has issued a new video purporting to show the bodies of two Israeli hostages, with the militants claiming that they died in air strikes on Gaza.

It comes a day after Hamas released another video of the hostages when they were alive, but warning they could die if Israel continued its bombardment. Israel denied they were killed by strikes. Its defence minister accused the militants of "psychological abuse". He added that military pressure was essential to release more hostages.

The video released on Monday shows a woman named as Noa Argamani, speaking under duress and saying that two men with whom she had been held had been killed in captivity. She says the men - one of whom was identified as Itay Svirsky, 38 - were killed by "our own IDF strikes", referring to the Israel Defence Forces.

She added that they were buried under rubble after the strikes, but that Hamas fighters had "succeeded in saving my life". It was not clear when the video was taken. IDF Spokesperson Daniel Hagari said the hostages had not been killed by Israeli forces. "This is a Hamas lie," he said in a statement. "The building where they were being held was not a target."

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said: "Hamas is severely beaten by Israeli forces, what is left for them is to lash out at the sensitive nerves of the Israeli society through the psychological abuse of the (Israeli) family members."

He also insisted that continued military pressure remained vital. "They only talk to us when they want something," Gallant said. "The moment we give them ceasefire without a price, they won't talk to us." *—BBC News*

Israel shatters 100 rocket launchers

TEL AVIV, 16 JAN

The IDF (Israel Defence Forces) is continuing its assault on Hamas terrorist bases in Gaza. In the past day, the IDF destroyed about 100 rocket launch facilities and killed a number of terrorists. The rocket facilities were found by fighters of the IDF's 401st Armoured Brigade's Combat Team in the Beit Lahia area of Gaza. Of these, about 60 rockets are ready for launch at civilian targets in Israel. In North Shati, fighters of the IDF's reserve 5th Infantry Brigade directed a combat helicopter in the elimination of nine terrorists. In the Khan Yunis area, forces from the 7th Armored Brigade directed a number of aircraft to eliminate terrorists identified there, as well as a combat helicopter that destroyed an observation post that endangered Israeli forces. *—ANI*

PAKISTAN ELECTIONS

Number of young voters surges to 56.86 million

ISLAMABAD, 16 JAN

The number of young voters in Pakistan has surged to 56.86 million from 46.43 million in 2018 and they are expected to play a crucial role in determining the outcome of the 8 February general elections.

The huge number of young voters, a majority of whom use social media, could not only influence the electorate using propaganda tools on online platforms but even alter the electoral scene in several constituencies if they turn out in large numbers on election day, the Dawn newspaper reported quoting analysts.

DISTRICTS WITH HIGH PROPORTION OF YOUNG VOTERS

Districts	Total voters	Young voters	Percentage of young voters
Bajaur	664,711	361,910	54.45
North Waziristan	430,488	233,763	54.30
Khyber	638,743	338,846	53.05
Kohistan (upper)	75,660	39,931	52.78
Upper Dir	590,433	307,545	52.08

The number of young voters in Pakistan has surged to 56.86 million from 46.43 million in 2018 *PHOTO: ELECTION COMMISSION OF PAK*

With the total number of voters totalling 128.58 million, the young voters numbering 56.86 million constitute 44.22 per cent, the report added.

They include 31.85 million from Punjab province, 11.72 million from Sindh, 10.72 million from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 2.3 million from Balochistan. The proportion of young voters in 2018 was 43.82 per cent of total voters.

There are 23.51 million voters between the ages of 18 and 25 while the number of voters between the ages of 26 and 35 years is 33.34 million. The 23.51 million voters between the ages of 18-25 include 14.8 million males and 9.32 million females.

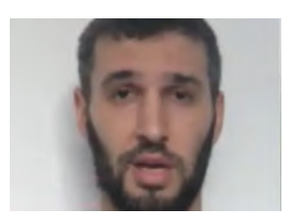
The 33.34 million voters in the age group of 26-35 years include 17.89 million male and 15.44 million female voters. In addition, another 28.74 million voters are in the age bracket of 36-45 years. They include 15.08 million male and 13.67 million female voters.

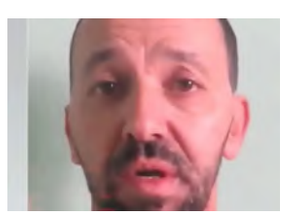
A thorough analysis of the age-wise data of voters reveals that as many as 19 districts in three provinces excluding Sindh have more than 50 per cent of individuals below the age of 35 enrolled as voters.

In the electoral rolls prepared for the 2013 general polls, the total number of voters was 86.18 million, of which 17.5 million voters were under 25 years of age, while 24.2 million voters were between 26 and 35 years old. *—PTI*

The hostages had not been killed by Israeli forces. This is a Hamas lie. The building where they were being held was not a target

-Daniel Hagari, IDF Spokesperson





The woman said that they were buried under rubble *PHOTO: X/MARIONAWFAL*

Gold slips ₹100; silver declines ₹300

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Gold prices slipped Rs 100 to Rs 63,450 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid weak global cues, according to HDFC Securities.The precious metal had ended at Rs 63,550 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also declined Rs 300 to Rs 76,400 per kilogram. Snapping the two-day winning streak, spot gold prices in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,450/10 grams, down by Rs 100, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, gold and silver were trading lower at USD 2,049 per ounce and USD 23.06 per ounce, respectively.Following a recovery in the dollar and US Treasury yields, gold prices declined on Tuesday, Gandhi added. *—PTI*

Rupee plunges 23 paise to 83.09 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 16 JAN

The rupee slumped 23 paise to 83.09 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as a strong greenback against major rivals overseas and negative equity market dented investor sentiment.Besides, volatile crude oil prices in the international markets weighed on the domestic currency, forex traders said.At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic currency opened at 82.95 and traded in the range of 82.92 to 83.09 against the greenback during intra-day. The unit finally settled at 83.09 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 23 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee settled with a gain of 9 paise at 82.86 against the US dollar. This was the ninth consecutive day of gain for the Indian currency.Meanwhile, the US dollar gained on safe-haven demands amid concern over disruption in global trade through the Red Sea route. Choudhary said the rupee is expected to "trade with a slight negative bias on risk aversion in the global markets amid escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. *—PTI*

Maruti Suzuki India hikes vehicle prices

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday said it has increased prices of its entire model range with immediate effect.An estimated weighted average of increase across models is 0.45 per cent, the auto major said in a regulatory filing.This indicative figure is calculated using ex-showroom prices of models in Delhi and will come into effect from January 16, 2024, it added. Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) sells a range of cars starting from Alto to Invicto, priced between Rs 3.54-28.42 lakh (ex-showroom). *—PTI*

First AI-based address correction platform launched

GURUGRAM, 16 JAN

Ecom Express Limited, a tech-driven logistics solutions provider, announces the launch of Bulls.ai to simplify address related challenges for delivery of e-commerce parcels across India, especially for the small towns and cities. The unique platform leverages the deeper data of nearly 2 billion parcels delivered by Ecom Express since its inception.To enhance last-mile logistics, Ecom Express addresses common issues faced by the logistics and e-commerce sector. With 80 per cent of addresses relying on landmarks up to 1.5 km away, geolocating becomes a hurdle, causing an average deviation of about 500 m between the written address and the doorstep. The newly launched Bulls.ai solution improves operational accuracy by correcting, standardizing, and predicting geo-coordinates for addresses across length and breadth of vast topology of India, not just in metro and tier-1 cities but also into hinterlands of tier-2 cities and beyond where the address quality becomes inferior. *—PTI*

Guj, K'taka best in startups promotion

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal also topped the list

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Secretary Ramesh Abhishek releases a publication on States' Startup Ranking 2018, in New Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

Gujarat and Karnataka are ranked as the 'best performers' in developing startup ecosystem for budding entrepreneurs, according to the ranking of states and Union territories by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh are also categorised as the best performers.

The ranking is a yearly exercise under DPIIT that evaluates all states and Union Territories on their efforts to build an ecosystem conducive to startup growth.A total of 33 states and Union territories (UTs) participated in the exercise.

The states and Union Territories were broadly divided into two sections based on their population size --those having more than 1 crore and the ones with less than 1 crore.

Gujarat has been ranked as the best performer for the fourth time in a row. Karnataka has been ranked in this segment for the second consecutive year.

The exercise is aimed at supporting states and Union territories (UTs) in developing their startup ecosystem and learning from each other's best practices. Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya, are categorised as the top performers.

Similarly eight states are categorised as 'leader' and that include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur, and Tripura.

States under 'the emerging startup ecosystems' category include Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Ladakh, Mizoram, Puducherry, and Sikkim, according to the ranking.

They are all evaluated across 25 action points, ranging from institutional support, fostering innovation, access to market, incubation and funding support. *—PTI*

Govt slaps 50% duty on molasses exports

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

The government has imposed 50 per cent export duty on molasses, a by-product of sugarcane and key ingredient for ethanol production, amid likely decline in sugar production in the current season.

According to a finance ministry notification, the order will come into force from January 18.

The move is aimed at boosting the availability of molasses for domestic distilleries and help meet the government's ethanol blending target.

In the current year, the government aims to achieve 15 per cent blending of ethanol with petrol for which 690 litres of ethanol would be required. Without diversion for ethanol, the government has estimated sugar production to decline to 32.3-33 million tonne in the ongoing 2023-24 season (October-September) as against 37.3 million tonne in the previous season.

India exports molasses to countries including Vietnam, South Korea, the Netherlands and the Philippines. Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat are the three states which export molasses. *—PTI*

TEA EXPORTS DIP 1.65% DURING JAN TO OCT 2023

KOLKATA, 16 JAN

Tea exports from the country dipped 1.65 per cent at 182.69 million kilogramme during January to October of 2023 as compared to 185.75 million kilogramme in the same period of the previous calendar.

Exports from North India during the first 10 months of calendar 2023 stood lower at 110.33 million kilogramme, registering a decline of 4.62 per cent from the preceding similar period, according to Tea Board data.

Similarly, exports from South India on the contrary increased 3.25 per cent at 72.36 million kilogramme during January to October of 2023, as against 70.08 million kilogramme in the similar previous period.

During calendar 2022, exports of tea stood at 231.08 million kilogramme, registering a rise of 17.57 per cent over 2021 at 196.54 million kilogramme.

Sources in the tea industry said that the export scenario remains grim as shipments to Iran are in jeopardy due to the payment problem with that country."Under such a situation, efforts are on to identify new markets like UAE which has already become the second largest importer after the CIS block.According to Tea Board data, the estimated production of the crop during October 2023 across the country was higher at 182.84 million kilogramme, higher from 163.15 million kilogramme in the corresponding month of 2022. *—PTI*

Govt slashes windfall tax on crude petroleum

NEW DELHI, JAN 16

PHOTO: PTI

The government has cut the windfall tax on domestically-produced crude oil to Rs 1,700 per tonne from Rs 2,300 per tonne with effect from Tuesday.

The tax is levied in the form of Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED).

According to an official notification, SAED on export of diesel, petrol and jet fuel or ATF has been retained at nil.

The new rates are effective from January 16.

India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1, 2022, joining a growing number of nations that tax supernormal profits of energy companies.

The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks. *—PTI*

Markets end 5-day winning run on weak global cues

MUMBAI, 16 JAN

Nifty touched its all-time intra-day high of 22,124.15 ***PHOTO: PTI***

Stock markets snapped their five-day winning run on Tuesday with the benchmark Sensex declining by 199 points due to profit-taking in IT and oil shares and weak global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 199.17 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 73,128.77.

The index opened lower but staged a recovery in late-morning deals to touch its all-time intra-day high of 73,427.59. The barometer therafter failed to hold onto gains due to profit-taking in the broader market and retreated by 367.65 points or 0.50 per cent to a low of 72,960.29.

The Nifty touched its all-time intra-day high of 22,124.15 before closing lower by 65.15 points or 0.29 per cent at 22,032.30.

In the last five days, the BSE benchmark rallied 1,972.72 points or 2.76 per cent, and the Nifty jumped 584.45 points or 2.71 per cent.Among the Sensex firms, Wipro, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Reliance Industries, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services were the major laggards.

IT stocks fell on profit-taking after rallying sharply in the past two sessions.

Tata Steel, Titan, Maruti, Larsen & Toubro, ITC and JSW Steel were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower while Shanghai ended in the positive territory.

European markets were trading lower. The US markets were closed on Monday on account of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

"FII flows are mixed due to a lack of fresh triggers. Oil prices stayed firm amid undeterred geopolitical tensions," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. *—PTI*

JIO SHARES FALL 6% POST 3RD QTR EARNINGS

MUMBAI, 16 JAN

The company had earned a consolidated net profit of Rs 668 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal

Shares of Jio Financial Services Ltd on Tuesday fell by over 6 per cent after the company reported 56 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 294 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023, compared to the previous quarter.

At the NSE, it fell 5.67 per cent to Rs 251.60.

The company had earned a consolidated net profit of Rs 668 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal, Jio Financial Services said in a regulatory filing on Monday.

Revenue too moderated to Rs 414 crore, from Rs 608 crore in the September quarter.

For the nine months ended December, the company's net profit stood at Rs 1,294 crore, the filing said. *—PTI*

'Green hydrogen key to zero carbon'

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Billionaire Gautam Adani on Tuesday said green hydrogen holds the key to India's journey to net-zero carbon emissions, and its current high cost can be reduced by replicating the solar power model.

In a blog post for the World Economic Forum (WEF), the head of apples-to-airport Adani Group said leapfrogging to renewables and green hydrogen will help India achieve energy security and improve air quality in cities.

Green hydrogen produced by splitting water using renewable electricity is a clean fuel with no carbon emissions. It can be used as a feedstock in industries like steel and oil refineries and as fuel in automobiles and produces water on being burnt.

"Renewable energy has come a long way but relies on the right weather conditions; green hydrogen could be a viable alternative to fossil fuels," Adani said.

Vertical integration, where a company takes on all upstream and downstream activities associated with its main offering, could significantly reduce green hydrogen production costs, he said.

"Green hydrogen may be the last mile in the net-zero journey for many sectors, especially in India," he said.

However, its current cost is high and needs to be brought down. *—PTI*

TCS aims to train staff on AI skills

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

- "TCS is in investment mode, primarily getting the staff ready with the skills and also partnering with the right entities," officials said

"Country's largest IT services exporter Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) will train its entire staff of more than five lakh software engineers on the upcoming Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) opportunity," as per a senior official.As a business opportunity, Gen AI is in its "early days" right now and the use cases are smaller right now, head of the company's recently created 'AI.Cloud' unit Siva Ganesan said."The company, which had disclosed a few months ago about being engaged in 250 generative AI powered projects, is also using the intelligence gleaned from Gen AI for making its ongoing work for clients faster," he added.

"So it's probably smaller use cases right now. It is a matter of time before the huge transformation that we also talk about that supplements assets and augment come by. I think for right now it is wait and watch, we have to see in the coming quarters right of the game unfolds," he said."As it gears up for the future which will witness higher demand for AI offerings, TCS is in investment mode, primarily getting the staff ready with the skills and also partnering with the right entities," officials said.

"The workforce is getting geared and getting primed and it's a matter of time when all the organization itself is (Gen) AI ready," he said. *—PTI*

SUNNY LEONE LAUNCHES HER OFFICIAL AI CLONE

MUMBAI, 16 JAN

Kamoto.AI has strengthened India's position on the world map for advanced Generative AI by launching the first-ever official AI clone of an Indian celebrity. The official AI replica launched in Mumbai recently was that of Bollywood sensation, diva & entrepreneur Sunny Leone, who enjoys widespread popularity worldwide. She launched the official AI clone of herself in the presence of Kamoto. AI co-founders Toshendra Sharma & Rohendra Singh amid a massive gathering in Mumbai. "Generative AI can be leveraged in myriad ways, and this first-ever official AI clone of a global celeb like Sunny Leone manifests it. *—PTI*

Sunny Leone ***PHOTO: PTI***

SETTLING TRANSACTIONS

SEBI renews recognition to AMC Repo Clearing for 1 year

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

AMC Repo Clearing Ltd will not undertake any activity except that of clearing and settling of transactions ***PHOTO: PTI***

Capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has renewed its recognition to AMC Repo Clearing Ltd as a clearing corporation for one year for clearing and settling transactions in repo and reverse repo in debt securities.

The regulator has granted renewal of recognition for one year starting from January 17, 2024 till January 16, 2025, according to a notification uploaded on Sebi's website on Tuesday.

Under the rules, AMC Repo Clearing Ltd will not undertake any activity except that of clearing and settling of transactions in repo and reverse repo in the debt securities that are dealt with or traded on a recognised stock exchange.

Earlier, SEBI granted recognition to such clearing corporations in January last year.

In October 2020, Sebi allowed setting up of a Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC) for clearing and settlement of repo transactions in debt securities. Subsequently, in February 2021, the regulator issued guidelines wherein asset management companies (AMCs) were required to contribute Rs 150 crore as share capital for setting up of LPCC by mutual funds.

The decision to allow the mutual fund industry to set up LPCC was aimed at helping the fund in tackling redemption pressure and settle transactions in the corporate bond market. *—PTI*

L&T BAGS ORDER FOR BULLET TRAIN PROJECT

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday said its construction arm has bagged a 'mega order' to set up an electrification system for the bullet train project in the country. The order has been bagged from an authorised Japanese agency."The railways strategic business group of L&T Construction has secured a mega contract to ....construct 508 route km of high-speed electrification system works for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) Project, popularly referred to as the bullet train project," the company said in a filing to BSE.

After completion, this electrification system will enable trains to travel at speed of up to 320 kilometre per hour.This project is being funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and is being implemented by an authorised Japanese agency acting for and on behalf of National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd. *—PTI*

Goyal to meet 40 unicorn startups

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will hold discussions with senior representatives of 40 unicorn startups like Lenskart, Zerodha, and Boat here on Wednesday, an official said.Issues which will figure in the deliberations include ways to further promote sustainable growth of the sector, risks, domestic capital mobilisation and position India on the global startup landscape, the official said.

Startup firms valued over USD 1 billion are categorised as unicorns."Unicorns from different sectors and cities will be there. The sectors which would see participation include fintech, e-commerce and logistics," the official added.

The other firms who would attend the meeting include CarDekho, and EasyMy Trip. Government has taken a series of steps to promote the startup ecosystem in the country.

Over 1.17 lakh startups are recognised by the government. *—PTI*

SATYA NADELLA'S TAKE

'What AI does to science will be interesting'

DAVOS, 16 JAN

Artificial Intelligence may have given new tools to science, but the most interesting thing to watch out for will be what it can do to accelerate science, Microsoft chief Satya Nadella said on Tuesday.

He also dismissed concerns that AI cannot be governed or regulated.

"There is nothing that cannot be controlled or governed by humankind for better use and this is one of the easiest and simplest technologies. What is needed is that it is governed properly and I'm sure it will happen," Nadella said.

He also said that the last thing the world needs is technology creating a divide and "we need to be watchful of it".

Speaking at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024, Microsoft's Chairman and CEO said Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been gaining a lot of scale recently with the advent of ChatGPT and many other platforms.

"First time, I actually became a believer was when I saw GitHub Copilot, that actually made me a convert," he said.

"But, what AI will do to

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella ***PHOTO: PTI***

science is probably the most interesting thing for me," he said during a conversation with WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab.

"What can be done about energy transition, what

- Speaking at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Microsoft's Chairman and CEO said Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been gaining a lot of scale recently with the advent of ChatGPT and many other platforms

can be done about cancer detection, what it can do with molecule behaviour. So far what we have seen is that it has brought new tools to science, but we are yet to see how it can accelerate science," Nadella said.

On the technology front, the top Microsoft executive said he is always anchoring back to three things, quantum, AI and mixed reality or embodied AI or call it humanoid robots.

"Can we give birth to a new quantum revolution that I want to see," he said.

He also said the world is not seeing any economic growth if adjusted for inflation but AI can trigger economic expansion just like it happened when PCs came into picture. *—PTI*

ITF Women's Open: Rashmikaa-Vaidehi pair enters QF

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

Shrivalli Rashmikaa Bhamidipaty along with Vaidehi Chaudhari entered the women's doubles quarterfinals of the ITF Women's Open here on Tuesday. During their pre-quarterfinal encounter, the Indian pair beat the Indo-Taipei duo of Rutuja Bhosale and En Shuo Liang 7-5, 6-0. As for the other pre-quarterfinal meets, the Sharmada Balu and Sravya Shivani Chilakalapudi pair defeated Sai Samhitha Chamarthi and Soha Sadiq duo 7-6 (4), 6-4. Among another Indian to advance to the quarterfinals was Prarthana G Thombare, along with Anastasia Tikhonova, who beat the wild card entrant pair of Humera Baharmus and Saumya Vig 6-4, 6-3. The only two singles matches for the day involved Japan's Sakura Hosogi, who fought off Italy's Camilla Rosatello 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-3, whereas Slovakia's Dalila Jakupovic sailed past Sahaja Yamalapalli 6-2, 6-3. *—PTI*

ICC bans Nasir Hossain for 2 years on fraud charges

DUBAI, 16 JAN

Bangladesh all-rounder Nasir Hossain on Tuesday was banned from all cricket for two years, with six months of that suspended, after he accepted three charges of breaching the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code. Hossain, who was charged by the ICC in September 2023, admitted to three charges. Charge No. 1 relates to "Breach of Article 2.4.3 of the Code, in that he failed to disclose to the Designated Anti-Corruption Official (without unnecessary delay) the receipt of a gift that was offered to him that had a value of over US$750, namely the gift of a new iPhone 12," said the ICC in a statement. He also "failed to disclose to the Designated Anti-Corruption Official full details of the approach or invitation he received to engage in Corrupt Conduct via the new iPhone 12." *—PTI*

'Chaturvedi's unbeaten 404 is a matter of pride'

BENGALURU, 16 JAN

After Prakhar Chaturvedi became the first player to score 400 runs in the final of the Cooch Behar Trophy, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday praised him and said that it is a "matter of pride" for the state. Siddaramaiah took to his official X account and congratulated Karnataka Under-19 Cricket Team for winning the Cooch Bihar Trophy for the first time in 79 years. "Congratulations to the Karnataka Under-19 Cricket Team for winning the Cooch Bihar Trophy for the first time in 79 years. This win added to the Sankranti festival celebrations. Opening batsman Prakhar Chaturvedi's unbeaten 404 is a matter of pride. Karnataka team achieved a new milestone by piling up a record total of 890 runs. I sincerely hope that the young players will achieve at the international level in the near future," Siddaramaiah wrote on X. *—ANI*

Ex-Indian-origin national hockey player dies

SINGAPORE, 16 JAN

Singapore's oldest Olympian and former national hockey player of Indian-origin, Ajit Singh Gill, passed away on Tuesday at the age of 95 after battling end-stage renal failure, according to a media report. Gill, who competed in the 1956 Melbourne Games, is survived by his 92-year-old wife Surjit Kaur, five children, 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, The Straits Times newspaper reported. His family and friends in the sports community remember him as a sport-loving man whose kind and indefatigable spirit inspired many. *—PTI*

WFI seeks suspension revocation from govt

WFI said legal options will be explored only if talks fail

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Tuesday decided that it will seek a dialogue with the Sports Ministry for revocation of its suspension, saying it does not want a clash with the government and the legal options will be explored only if talks fail.

The WFI had earlier said it will knock the doors of judiciary to get the suspension revoked but changed the mind at its Executive Council (EC) meeting which was chaired by President Sanjay Singh and attended by 12 other elected members.

Secretary General Prem Chand Lochab and Senior Vice President Devender Kadian skipped the meet.

"We do not want a clash with the government. We are not moving court as of today. We will seek time from the ministry and a delegation will try and speak with the government," Sanjay Singh told PTI after the meeting. Asked if he won't get time from the ministry he said,"First we have to try. We want to know what we need to do to get the suspension lifted. Like UWW had set certain conditions when it had suspended. The ground was not holding elections. The government has suspended us but there is no clarity how it will be lifted."

Secretary General Prem Chand Lochab and Senior Vice President Devender Kadian skipped the meet *PHOTO: PTI*

Sanjay Singh also said that state associations have given their commitment to send teams for the Nationals that will be conducted by the WFI in Pune and not the one which the ad-hoc panel has planned to organise in Jaipur.

"The WFI Constitution mandates the Federation to host the Nationals and not any ad-hoc panel. A total of 25 state associations have already written to the ministry and the UWW that it will send teams for Nationals to be conducted by WFI."

It has been learnt that many wrestlers selected by state associations through trials have already booked tickets for Pune, where WFI will conduct Nationals from 29-31 January.

The ad-hoc panel has announced that it will conduct senior Nationals from 3 February in Jaipur and the age group championships in Gwalior. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

3 Nat'l Games players to get reduced 3-yr ban

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Three National Games participants were among 11 sportspersons, who ended up getting reduced sanctions for failed dope tests after admitting to their offence within 20 days of being charged, the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) has revealed.

Liable to be banned for four years, their sentence was reduced by one year due to early acceptance of guilt earlier this month. Their names appeared in the latest NADA list of those who were handed reduced sanctions of three years under Article 10.8 of the NADA Rules. Kamaljeet Kaur (100m and 200m), Ajay Kumar (5000m and 10000m) and Harjodhvir Singh (5000m and 10000m) are the three track-and-field athletes, who failed dope tests in the October 25-November 9 National Games in Goa.

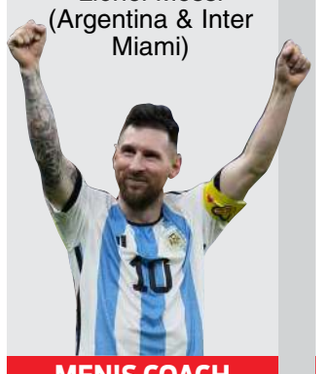
Article 10.8.1 of the NADA Anti-Doping Rules allows athletes charged with a four-year ban to benefit from a one-year reduction if they admit the violation and accept the penalty within 20 days of being charged.

More than 20 athletes from various sports returned positive for banned drugs in tests conducted during the Games. *—PTI*

THE BEST FIFA FOOTBALL AWARDS 2023 WINNERS LIST

MEN'S PLAYER 2023

Lionel Messi (Argentina & Inter Miami)



WOMEN'S PLAYER 2023

Aitana Bonmati (Spain & Barcelona)

MEN'S COACH 2023

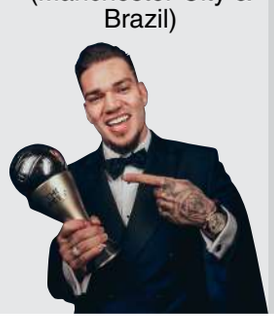
Pep Guardiola (Manchester City)

WOMEN'S COACH 2023

Sarina Wiegman (England)

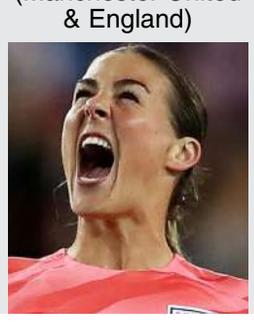
MEN'S GOALKEEPER 2023

Ederson Moares (Manchester City & Brazil)



WOMEN'S GOALKEEPER 2023

Mary Earps (Manchester United & England)



AUSTRALIAN OPEN

SUMIT NAGAL STUNS WORLD NO 27 TO ENTER 2ND ROUND

Sumit Nagal celebrates after defeating Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan in their first round match *PHOTO: AP*

MELBOURNE, 16 JAN

Indian tennis ace Sumit Nagal stunned world number 27 Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan in straight sets to enter the Australian Open second round for the first time in his career here on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old Nagal, who made it to the main draw through the qualifiers, beat 31st seed Bublik 6-4 6-2 7-6(7-5) in a gruelling match that lasted two hours and 38 minutes. Nagal's win on Tuesday was the first time in 35 years that an Indian beat a seeded player in a Grand Slam.

The last time it happened was back in 1989 when Ramesh Krishnan won over Mats Wilander, the then world number one and defending champion at the Australian Open. The win also ensured Nagal's first ever progression to the second round of the season's first Grand Slam. In 2021, he had lost 2-6, 5-7, 3-6 to Lithuania's Ricardas Berankis in the opening round.

The world number 137 Indian will be playing in the second round of a Grand Slam for the second time in his career. In the 2020 US Open, Nagal had lost to second seed and eventual champion Dominic Thiem 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 in the second round.

Nagal was off to an impressive start as he broke Bublik in the first game of the match but he also failed to hold on to his own serve next as the scoreline read 1-1. The Indian then broke his opponent's serve twice to take the opening set 6-4 in 42 minutes.

Nagal played even better in the second set as he broke serve of his opponent twice while holding his own all through to win 6-2 in 43 minutes. In the third set, both the players held their serve till the seventh game when Nagal broke his opponent to take a 4-3 lead. He then cruised ahead at 5-3. *—PTI*

Swiatek beats Sofia Kenin

MELBOURNE, 16 JAN

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek survived an early test of her Australian Open title hopes when she held off 2020 champion Sofia Kenin 7-6 (2), 6-2 on Tuesday in the first round. Kenin served for the first set at 5-4 but could not close it out. Swiatek rallied to take it in a tiebreaker and then broke Kenin's serve five games later. "It wasn't easy to find my rhythm. I felt a little bit off and Sofia did everything to keep it that way, huge respect to her," Swiatek said. "I managed to get my level up in the second set." Swiatek, aiming for a fifth major title but first in Australia, faces another former finalist in her tough bracket at the top of the women's draw. Danielle Collins, the runner-up here two years ago, beat 2016 champion Angelique Kerber 6-2, 3-6, 6-1. "A tough little bracket that we have!" Collins said. "I was like, 'wow, I get really great draws now. But if you're trying to win a Grand Slam, you kind of have to beat everyone." *—AP*

Igor Swiatek *PHOTO: AP*

Alcaraz destroys Gasquet

MELBOURNE, 16 JAN

The bugs bothered Carlos Alcaraz in his first match at the Australian Open for two years, and so did the 37-year-old veteran Richard Gasquet. For the first set, at least. After taking an hour and 12 minutes to clinch the opener in a tiebreaker, second-ranked Alcaraz raced through the rest of the match in another hour against the tiring, sweat-soaked Frenchman for a 7-6 (5), 6-1, 6-2 win on Tuesday night. The first two games took a combined 17 minutes, with the 20-year-old Alcaraz needing a few moments to try to remove a persistent insect that was bothering him behind the baseline just before he held for 1-1. Both players used their rackets to push the bugs away from the court after the eighth game, and Alcaraz was at it again after the first set. There were few distractions after that until Alcaraz was serving for the match and the game went to deuce five times before he closed with an ace. He threw in some drop shots and slices that made Gasquet run, saying it shows he's "playing for myself, but I always try to make the people enjoy watching tennis." "Every set, I played better and better," he said. "In the end, I played at quite a good level." *—AP*

IND VS AFG FINAL MATCH

India's Rishabh Pant joins Virat Kohli, Rinku Singh and others after his net practice as part of his rehabilitation programme, during team India's practice session ahead of the third T20 cricket match between India and Afghanistan, at M Chinnaswamy Stadium, in Bengaluru, on Tuesday. Pant is continuing his recovery at the NCA from a horrible car accident in late 2022, an accident that forced him to have ligament reconstruction surgeries *PHOTO: PTI*

INDIA OPEN

Priyanshu Rajawat, HS Prannoy enter second round

NEW DELHI, 16 JAN

Priyanshu Rajawat shocked Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya Sen in an all-Indian clash to join HS Prannoy in the second round of the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Tuesday. World Ranked (WR) 30th, Rajawat staged a comeback after losing the first game to defeat WR19 Sen 16-21 21-16 21-13 in a 75-minute affair.

"I was prepared that I have to win this match because I had lost last time and I was really sad, so I just wanted to hang in there after losing the first game," Rajawat said.

"I was leading 18-14 in the third game last time so I just wanted to play my 100 per cent and did'nt want to take anything lightly, so I was expecting him to make a comeback, so wanted to finish it quickly."

Indian WR9 Prannoy dished out a compact game to outwit WR13 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei 21-6 21-19 in 42 minutes earlier in the day. Prannoy will take on Rajawat in the second round.

Talking about his match, Prannoy said: "The planning was spot on in the first game. I was executing good shots from back of the court.

He was not getting the length well, so I had to wrap it up."

"In the second game, he was pushing the speed and finishing a lot of shuttle from the back but I was happy to fight back from 11-16 and towards the end, I was playing the right game.

It was important to close it in two games because if it is the third game, then it is always a tough one as he (Chen) pushes with his experience.

Indian WR9 Prannoy dished out a compact game to outwit WR13 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in 42 minutes *PHOTO: PTI*

Prannoy got into a nice rhythm right at the start, mixing his half smashes, drops and tosses from the back court.

Chen struggled to negotiate the length of the shuttle that Prannoy was playing and ended up committing too many errors. Soon, the Indian had an overwhelming 11-2 lead at the break.

He continued to dominate the rallies as Chen surrendered the opening game meekly in the end.

A small crowd had gathered by the time Prannoy took the court and chants of "HSP" and "India" filled the air at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall. *—PTI*

Indian women hockey team beat Italy 5-0 to enter SF

RANCHI, 16 JAN

Udita Duhan capped her milestone 100th international appearance with a double strike that took India closer to a Paris ticket after hosts thrashed Italy 5-1 to enter the semi-final of the FIH Olympic Qualifier here on Tuesday.

Udita (1st minute, 55th), Deepika (41st), Salima Tete (45th) and Navneet Kaur (53rd) were the goal scorers for Indian team as it finished second in Pool B with two wins from three games behind United States, who remained unbeaten. India will take on Pool A toppers Germany in the semifinals on Thursday, while USA will be up against Japan.

The top three teams will qualify for the Paris Olympics. It was yet another good show by the Indians after the 0-1 loss to USA in their opener as they controlled the flow of the match from start to finish. Udita was rock solid at the back, while diminutive Neha Goyal and Salima controlled the proceedings in the mid-field.

Indian players acknowledge fans after winning FIH Women's Olympic Qualifiers Ranchi hockey match against Italy *PHOTO: PTI*

It was a perfect start for India as just like their previous match, the hosts took the lead in the first minute. India continued from where they left and played high-press, attacking hockey from the onset. Seconds into the match, Sangita Kumari forced Italy goalkeeper Lucia Ines Caruso to effect a fine save.

Sangita's reverse hit from top of the circle was padded away by a full-stretched Caruso but from the resultant attack India secured their first penalty corner. And Udita was bang on target with a perfectly-executed slap shot to hand the hosts an early lead.

Italy had a chance to draw level when they were awarded their first penalty corner just 50 seconds from the end of the first quarter but in turn, it was India who got a shot at the goal from a counter. *—PTI*